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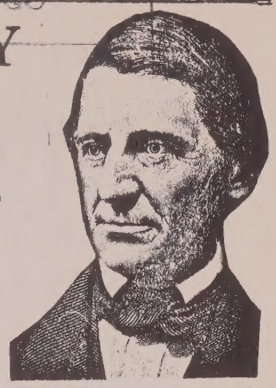

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By
KENNETH WALTER CAMERON

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Dear Family,

In Issue No. 13, to appear in the Fall, you may expect an article entitled, "Views of the Epic in Thoreau's Harvard."

The remarkable Emerson picture at the end of this issue has been reprinted from Thoreau by Henry Seidel Canby through the courtesy of the publisher, Houghton Mifflin Company. It is a photograph of a portrait by Samuel Worcester Rowse, in the possession of Professor Townsend Scudder, III. Some of our members may wish to frame it.

The picture of Thoreau (aged 39) is taken from the Maxham daguerreotype of 1856, a glass negative owned by Anton Kovar, Esq., 9 Court St., Arlington, Massachusetts, reproduced in this issue with his permission. It, too, may be framed.

We are happy to report that the following members greatly assisted us in meeting our bills by contributions over and above their membership fees:

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These generous friends have lightened our burdens and encouraged us to work harder and improve each issue. We hope that others of you will remember the "Publication Fund" when you send us your renewals.

We are happy to send gift subscriptions in your name. The recipients of a one-year gift membership often become loyal, permanent members. Will you help a friend become acquainted with the work of the Society?

You will receive notice later of the date of the annual meeting in Concord with the Thoreau Society. Last year nearly thirty of our members attended.

If there be a red check in this space, your membership will expire in September, 1958, and the present number of the E S Q will be the last you will receive under your last remittance. Will you kindly send us your $3.00 renewal now so that we may care for all bookkeeping well in advance of summer? This courtesy will be much appreciated by our overworked staff!

We hope to report in a future issue on the success of the campaign to SAVE WALDEN. Please let your friends read over your copy of the last issue.

Best wishes from

YOUR COMMITTEE.

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THE EDITOR WISHES TO THANK ALL MEMBERS WHO SENT HIM CHRISTMAS OR HANUKKAH GREETINGS LAST DECEMBER. HE RECIPROCATES YOUR KIND REGARDS.

Reprinted from the
Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society
for October 1956

History and Biography in Emerson's Unpublished Sermons

(*A Report of Progress and of Research Possibilities*)[1]

BY KENNETH WALTER CAMERON

THE two books of G. R. Owst[2] on medieval preaching and preachers have taught the historian to be respectful of sermons—at least those of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—and students of literature, following Coleridge, have kept alive an appreciation for at least the prose style of such pulpit giants of the English Renaissance as Jeremy Taylor, John Donne, Robert Leighton, and Launcelot Andrews. But as an archivist of American ecclesiastical records covering the last three centuries, I must confess that the bundles of old, brown manuscripts of the American Church fathers, written with microscopic pens and placed on my desk from time to time for cataloging, have not had much to commend them. To most of us, I believe, a dead sermon usually deserves a prompt interment. The wife of a Connecticut parson, who had preached for nearly fifty years, recently whispered in my ear that she had just burnt up his barrel, convinced that the world would not long grieve for the loss. Of course, she was right. And, doubtless, Emerson's literary executor felt somewhat the same way about the 180 discourses which the Concord sage had delivered during his active ministry of a little more than six years. Only two found their way into print during this period—the notable one on the Lord's Supper and a short "Right Hand of Fellowship" delivered at the ordination of Hersey Bradford Goodwin. A few circulated in manuscript among appreciative hearers, who may be responsible for a few gaps in the present file. But whatever acclaim Emerson received as a preacher—and there was considerable—most of it has been forgotten. This passage in the diary of the Reverend Convers Francis, dated December 9, 1827, is probably typical:[3]

> This day Mr. Emerson from Cambridge preached for me, though I performed the other services. His sermons were from I Timothy V, 4—"let them learn" & from II Chronicles XX, 20, "believe in the L. your G. &c." These sermons were distinguished by great felicity of thought & style, by rich moral eloquence, & by a fresh & fervent earnestness. It is delightful to see & to hear such a young man as Mr. E.

When McGiffert, in 1938, published a selection of twenty-five sermons in his *Young Emerson Speaks*, some of us then at work in the typescript journals realized that the stone rejected or ignored by researchers until that time might soon become, if not the head of the corner, a very necessary supporting wedge to protect it, and for quite other reasons than those in which his contemporaries at the Second Church may have delighted. Written for the most part between 1826 and 1833—a few as late as 1836—they were composed during the major crises of his life: the death of his first wife, Ellen; his search for security in Quakerism and Swedenborgism; his renunciation of the active ministry; his voyage to Europe to see Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Carlyle; and

[1] For generous privileges during a decade of research in the Emerson papers, I am indebted to the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association through its president, Edward Waldo Forbes, Esq., of the Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University.

[2] See Gerald Robert Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: an Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1450* (Cambridge, 1926); *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Cambridge, 1933).

[3] On the penultimate page of volume I of the "Ministerial Diary" of the Rev. Convers Francis, Jr., begun at Watertown, Mass., June 28, 1819. The last entry of volume I is dated Dec. 30, 1827. MS. owned by Mrs. Caleb Wheeler, Fairhaven Road, Concord. Used here with her permission. Convers Francis (1795–1863) was for twenty-three years pastor of the First Church in Watertown; also town historian and teacher in the Theological School at Cambridge.

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his period of hiving during the earliest of his lyceum lectures. The sermons reflect or anticipate these events. Their proximity, moreover, to the year 1834, the time of his poetic maturity,[4] to 1835, when he produced his "Statement of the First Philosophy," and to 1836, when he launched his important little book, *Nature*, ought long ago to have suggested that they might have special significance for all these early milestones. And they do.

During the past ten years, I have been noting biographical significance, tracing in the sermons the genesis of many of the later essays and poems, marking the development of the principal themes, recording his sources—that is, the bibliography of his reading—,[5] studying the books which he recommended to his parishioners,[6] and exploring the literary aspects: matters of style, symbolism, characterization, structure, imagery, description,[7] vignettes, exempla, analogies, proverb lore, and humor[8]—to name only a few. The first concrete result of this study is to be an exhaustive index to both the manuscripts and my annotations or marginalia—now complete and being prepared for the press. But with the foregoing topics, I shall not spend any time this morning, though Emerson himself might remind me that they should be preferred to the announced subject, since "The only teller of news is the poet."[9]

[4] This is the opinion of a specialist in Emerson's poetry. See Carl F. Strauch, "The Year of Emerson's Poetic Maturity: 1834," *Philological Quarterly*, XXXIV, no. 4 (Oct., 1955), pp. 353–377.

[5] See the Appendix for a rough list of some of these.

[6] From Sermon 40: "It is the interest & the duty of every family & every individual to give the greatest activity of circulation to good books of every kind—those seeds of civilization, those silent benefactors, those modest missionaries that carry light & truth & virtue from one generation to another." From Sermon 120: "It is better to read the books, for the most part, than it would be to have the power to converse with the authors. How much better in some respects is our intercourse with the dead, than with the living! . . . there are a thousand impediments that spring up in living conversation, from mixture of company, or uncongeniality of minds, that obstruct our full acquaintance with another's mind. . . . But a man may select these silent friends with particular regard to his own convenience. He may give leave of speech to whom he will in the great family of the wise. . . ." He recommends particular books in Sermon 36.

[7] For published examples of his nature descriptions, see *Young Emerson Speaks*, ed. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., Boston, 1938, *passim*. See also Sermon 23: "Though the earth, we inhabit, is nobly furnished, though the heavens are arched gloriously over our heads,—yet when the morning breaks in the east, & the sun rises,—man steps forth from his little dwelling into this swelling scene, to labour, to eat, to drink, to laugh, to talk, to sin, & to sleep again. He heeds it not, this wondrous majesty wherewith the great House of nature is adorned. Let the sun go up the sky, and the moon shine, & innumerable stars move before him in orbits so vast that centuries shall not fulfil them; let the seasons go round, and winter cover his fields with coats of dazzling snow & the summer pour out upon them her horn of plenty—he does not care—he does not know—he is creeping in a little path of his own. . . ."

History in the Sermons

Emerson drew upon ancient history for many of his lustres and illustrations—from Plutarch, Montaigne, Herodotus, and derivative treatises on Greece and Rome, like Mitford's. He used English and French histories in the same way, especially for the periods of the Renaissance, the Age of Reason, and the French Revolution; and his principal sources were Hume, Mackintosh, Clarendon, and the abundant literature on Napoleon. He scatters echoes of all these liberally throughout his pages. "When the Antinomians," he writes, for example, "broke open the churches and washed sheep in the baptismal font, those sheep were not baptized."[10] Early New England history is, however, his principal point of reference. He venerated the Puritans, and through a kind of Plymouth Rock alembic, he deals with the traditions of the holidays, fast days, Thanksgivings, Christmases, New Year's days, and institutions like the Sabbath. The Puritans are characterized

[8] From Sermon 116: "Come to Church when the Church is open and do not bring your body here to make a bed of your pew but bring your soul to be educated and sweetened and sacrificed."

[9] See *Journals*, V, 478.

[10] See Sermon 67.

in several discourses, and comparisons between the seventeenth century and his own day, carefully drawn.[11]

Most important, probably, to this Society are the numerous references to contemporary history—to Boston's mourning for Lafayette, the significance of the solar eclipse of 1834, the activity of the Cent Societies, Massachusetts elections, religious revivals, the importance of Harvard Commencements to the community, economic crises, the treatment of Indian tribes, analyses of crime in the court records, low scholarly standards of Harvard students, attitudes toward the immigrant and foreigner in Boston streets, and concrete details concerning the work of social relief and the distribution of alms. We hear of fires "like that mournful conflagration which has desolated one of our cities and turned 1500 persons into the street, for whose wants your charity is today implored."[12] European news is frequent. "At this moment the civilized world rings with rumors of alarm. In one devoted country the martyrs of freedom are cloven down by hundreds and thousands under the dragoons of a despot."[13] He commends "the recent revolution in France" as "a war of principle which, after destroying despotism, stayed its hand and did not as in former revolutions destroy the principle."[14] He rejoices "that the light of Christianity has been admitted by reason of the French Conquest of Algiers into the North of Africa."[15] On the eve of Parliament's passing the Reform Bill, he makes favorable and unfavorable remarks about the division of labor as manifested in New England life, and he frequently characterizes the United States in prophetic words.[16]

Boston institutions command considerable space: The Seaman's Chapel, the Port Society, the Female Asylum, the Second Church with its Hancock Sunday School, The Evangelical Treasury, the dedication of the Second Church Vestry or Chapel, the Chapel in Friend Street for the "free religious instruction of the poor," church libraries, and the Evangelical Missionary Society. One has many penetrating glimpses of Boston. "We live in a fair city. It is full of commodious and spacious mansions. But the eye that sees the morning sun shine on long streets of decorated dwellings is apt to forget how many obscure garrets, how many damp basements, are here and there found amid this magnificence."[17]

[11] See, for example, Sermon 113: "Not that I think there is any danger that the names and exploits of the Puritans will be forgotten. It has become fashionable to praise them. Our self-love leads us to extol our ancestors. But far better would it be that we should praise them with understanding,—that we should inherit their sentiments, value what they valued. And whilst we give them good words, not be in truth such aliens as to contemn their Religion. . . . Let us have juster regard to them and to their institution. Think of them as men whom God honoured with great usefulness. That solid sense, that expansion of the inner man to the truths of religion and of civil right—that greater reverence for history and for law which they had may compensate for any arts of trade, and mechanical improvements, & fine houses, which they had not. He that thinks so profoundly, he that acts so habitually in reference to the principles of the first class . . . may be excused if he have little playfulness in his conversation. . . ."

[12] See Sermon 36.

[13] See Sermon 114.

[14] See Sermon 97.

[15] See Sermon 97.

[16] See Sermon 113: "And what evil can we discern impending over us? The flag of this country is hurrying over the ocean into every port and island of the globe. You see a great country only half explored; fast increasing census, spreading cultivation; rising cities filled with every social institution. 'Tis the breath of life, the tumult of industry and not the sound of falling ruins. True; but it will not cost greater changes than have been exhibited, to blow the trumpet of civil war from one end of the country to the other, and from the sea to the wilderness; to turn those fleets of merchantmen into privateers and pirates; to turn these pleasant cities into strongholds of cruel factions; and, in the end, every house into a bloody castle; and the friendships that tie us in one community, into murderous hatreds. It needs no strange or impossible foreign influence or marvellous series of external events. It needs only certain change in the speculative principles which we ourselves entertain. It needs a preponderance of passion over reason, a little more violent preference of selfish interest over honest shame, than now we permit in ourselves—a little more casting off of the restraints of Puritan principles and Puritan manners, a little greater progress of unbelief which springs from a bad heart. . . . For when things have gone to a certain pass and strife begins, the antagonist parties goad each other on to indefinite mischief, and the atrocity of one is cause and plea of the atrocity of the others."

[17] See Sermon 40.

Biography in the Sermons

Emerson once wrote: "There is no history. There is only biography,"[18] and the sermons reflect this interest. He drew heavily upon the historians already mentioned for portraits of great men and anecdotes concerning the benefactors and scourges of mankind. But his attention also remained close to home. The sermon delivered after the death of George Sampson, a Boston merchant, foreshadows sketches which he later drew of people like Thoreau and his Aunt Mary.[19] There are notices of Mrs. Elizabeth Dorr and Mrs. Elizabeth Derby, formerly members of the Female Asylum of Boston.[20] His revision of Sermon 114, designed to be read in Concord before his mother and family on June 5, 1836, is a touching tribute to his lately deceased brother, Charles Chauncy.[21]

[18] See *Journals*, V, 208.

[19] See Sermon 168 (Aug. 3, 1834).

[20] See Sermon 128.

[21] See Sermon 114: "It may be you have been called to mourn the loss of a dear friend connected with yourself by all those bonds that make friendship dearest & its loss sorest. And what is it that such events say? Why this, certainly. The chasm of the loss, these bursting tears, this broken voice, this wearisome sense of privation,—what is it but so much eulogy of the departed? what is it but, under another form, a thanksgiving to God that he had so highly blessed us? It is an acknowledgment (how unsuspicious) of the privilege of being associated with a noble character. Indeed, brethren, I prize above all prosperity that which is sometimes called the joy of grief. I value every tear that is shed for departed men, because it is a certificate of the excellent endowments, the graces, the character which have dwelt with us. What good shall we compare with this good? with the reverence & love which human character has inspired in closest intimacy, where all hypocrisy & veil were impossible,—seen in the practice of common duties, & in the gaiety & vexations, the plans & failures, the opinions & actions of daily life, passing from duty to duty, at home, & abroad. When we have been made acquainted in our own familiar circle with one who was so severe an adorer of truth that it would have been as easy for him to steal as to dissemble; with one who so reverenced the oracle in his own mind that he held all men's opinion light in the balance with its softest whisper; with one who had such a value for time that he thought men's frugality of it the measure of their worth; with one who adding to his virtues the finest accomplishments, had no vanity, and never added to his necessary discourse one word for the sake of display; with one who amidst all the attractions which the world offered had so high a standard of action & character that more life had nothing to charm him & in his most ambitious hour held the world very cheap, with one who prized the religious sentiment as God's greatest gift to man, & was impatient of any discourse or speculations in the Church which led the mind away from this, because it was the basis of human strength, the succor in trouble, & especially the right of the great number who have almost no education but that which the Sabbath supplies them. . . ."

Professor Conrad Wright, in a recent monograph entitled, "Emerson, Barzillai Frost, and the Divinity School Address,"[22] suggests that R. W. E.'s sensitivity in the presence of the Reverend Mr. Frost's dull, uninspired and conventional pulpit discourses in Concord bore fruit in the warnings addressed in 1838 to the theological students in Cambridge. Overlooked by Dr. Wright, and belonging with the evidence, is Sermon 171, which deals with the character of Hersey Bradford Goodwin, for six years Dr. Ezra Ripley's assistant and a man who was everything Barzillai Frost apparently was not. Even in this eulogy, like Milton in *Lycidas*, Emerson condemned the hirelings and man-ordained clergy who too frequently in New England did harm to a spiritual religion. Asserting that truth is not committed primarily into the hands of any artificial professional class, he said:[23]

> Not of men wearing certain titles and garb, and visibly exercising the offices of the Church, but of the real priesthood, not made by man but by God, composed of individuals in every age of the world, in every country . . . who, out of love to the human soul, speak to men of its concerns. . . . I speak of the class of natural preachers, men of inward light whose eye is opened upon the laws of duty, and the beauty of holiness and who love to declare what they study.

Goodwin, he said, was one of these.

The Sermons in New England History

I have found the manuscripts rich in illustrating many areas of American life and thought.

(1) The impact of German Biblical criticism in the 1830's is one area. A little shy of it at first,[24] Emerson eventually accepted it, at the same time, apparently under its impact, groping after the other scriptures of the world. His well-documented Vestry Lectures, which I am being permitted to

[22] *Harvard Theological Review*, XLIX, no. 1 (Jan., 1956), pp. 19–43.

[23] See Sermon 171.

[24] See the sermon or "Thursday Lecture" now catalogued as "Houghton 387."

edit in a forthcoming study of the German influence, are built upon the lower and higher criticism of the Continent, to which, after leaving the ministry, he seldom or never adverted.

(2) The history of New England Unitarianism is another area. The upheaval concerning the Lord's Supper has blinded many students to the great service Emerson rendered the movement launched by Dr. Channing. The sermons make careful distinctions, deal with all the current issues, and contain remarkable passages in defense of Liberal Christianity. I quote but one:[25]

> . . . we [Unitarians] have no ties of opinion to each other. The theory we hold is the true one, that every man is a sect himself, and only unites for social worship with such as are nearest him in faith and feeling, without entering into any compact of opinion with his brethren or imposing any upon them. And it is hence more in our power than it ever was in the history of the Church, of any class of teachers, to say exactly what we think. Please God this liberty may be a substance not a name.

(3) The sermons bear upon the history of nineteenth-century optimism, natural religion, and, eventually, evolutionary theory.

(4) The history of the impact of scientific thought between 1800 and the Civil War is another area. Emerson's lifelong interest in natural history begins to be reflected in the sermons. He draws richly from astronomy, geology, chemistry, and biology for his illustrations, astronomy leading the others.[26] A study of his analogies especially shows his indebtedness to natural philosophy. "Many of you," he writes,[27] "have witnessed the common experiment of the loadstone. If you introduce a magnet," certain results will follow. He describes these results and then makes his application to spiritual matters, much as he does in *Nature*.

(5) The history of American preaching is another area. I am confident that Emerson's position as an active clergyman will be reassessed when his discourses shall have received the attention they merit.

(6) The history of the various towns in which he delivered his sermons is another area.[28] Boston, Concord, Lexington, New Bedford, and Plymouth are a few. He preached in New Hampshire also. Hartford Unitarians, in their centenary celebrations, made much of the fact that Emerson had preached among them on one of his trips south. The extant manuscript preaching record, listing all these places—some all the way to Florida—invites the diligent researcher to relate a particular sermon revision to the delivery at a particular place.

(7) The history of European influences upon American thought between 1825 and 1840 is another area. The sermons reflect Emerson's extensive reading in the works of the English, French and German Romantics.

(8) The sermons throw light on the history of education and the philosophy of instruction. Emerson shows remarkable insight into the child mind and admonishes the adult teacher with commendable conviction.[29]

[25] See Sermon 108A.

[26] See one sermon already in print: *Young Emerson Speaks*, ed. McGiffert, pp. 170–179.

[27] See Sermon 43.

[28] Sermon 3: "And if the foot of an invader defiled at this moment any sod on our soil I need hardly ask you, standing where I stand (in Concord) if your blood would keep its even and temperate flow; for the voice would cry to me from the graves of your fathers."

[29] See, for example, Sermon 148: "No one can be much acquainted with children without discovering that a boy or girl shows a very different character alone, from that which the same child exhibits in the company of other children. One who is inexperienced in the care of children & goes a stranger into a large school, is very apt to be disheartened by the appearance of idle, stupid, impracticable habits; the readiness with which children conspire together in frivolous teazing of their teacher. He thinks he sees malignity & obstinacy & he leaps to the disagreeable conclusion that no impression can be made upon this prematurely corrupt mass. It only needs that he should be intimately acquainted with each one to have this impression wholly effaced from his mind. It is a rule of education as of policy: 'Divide & Conquer.' As they are seen separately & the character of each individual disclosed it shows itself plastic & amiable & inquisitive; & the most disagreeable & obstinate child is found to be capable of good humor & application. The very expressions children use in their games attest to an attentive mind. . . ." See also Sermon 128.

(9) The history of the American Dream is another area. Emerson loved his country and on many occasions held the patriotic ideal before the eyes of his parishioners, but he joined to it a stern realism touching the then present attainments. For example,[30]

I see in the land a few cultivated minds, a few souls raised by their accomplishments and their toil . . . but what multitudes of men are all uncultivated, are, I might almost say, spiritually lame, and deaf, and blind. They do not judge for themselves, and how can they act in their own right? They lean on others' opinions. They can hardly be said to act voluntarily but by chance.

(10) The history of sectarianism in the early nineteenth century—of Quakers, Swedenborgians, Methodists, Calvinists, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and others—is a tenth area. These groups appear in the sermons, sometimes treated critically but often with surprising sympathy.

There is something in a high degree religious and beautiful in the affection with which the Catholic regards the Holy Virgin, which is every way preferable to the pagan conception of Diana, of Venus and Juno . . . the countenance which the genius of the Italian painters has delineated for the virgin has an angelic sweetness.[31]

Look at the fervent Methodist stealing away from every occupation and pleasure that other men pursue, to the obscure street where his humble class meet to sing and pray. Look at the Sectarian of each New Church that arises in the bosom of Christendom and see what an absorbing reality religion is to them. . . .[32]

Other areas are: (11) the history of the New England Sunday School,[33] (12) the history of oriental thought in America, and (13) the criticism of the novel.[34] These, too, can find footnotes in Emerson's homiletical papers.

[29] See Sermon 81.

[31] See Sermon 13.

[32] See Sermon 133.

[33] See Sermons 36, 40 and 148.

[34] See, for example, Sermon 117.

I am personally most interested (14) in the genesis of the Transcendental Movement and in the backgrounds of the poem "Gnothi Seauton" (1831), "The Statement of the First Philosophy" (1835), and *Nature* (1836), for all of which the sermons are a rich quarry.

Autobiography in the Sermons

I have time only to remind you, as Emerson wrote in his *Journals*,[35] that "all history is in us." The sermons reveal transitions in his thought and modifications of opinion which few readers of the published works or even of the definitive biography at present suspect. They show the life of a sensitive and creative mind and its arrival at costly and permanent convictions. One sees in little marginal notes or pencilled addenda into the very heart of the man. Sitting in pew number 13, one day after an especially tiring service, he scribbled on his manuscript: "I am tired of talking now; the lust of talking is over; and only want to excite the rest of the body and so quiet the lungs."[36] One senses his growing conviction about the limitations of the pulpit for him in sentences like these, addressed to his people toward the end of his ministry:[37]

Religion has been asleep this thousand years. I do not speak of any one sect. I speak of all. I speak of us. I think almost all of us are content to be religious by education and not by realizing its truths. The only way for a man to become religious is to be so by himself.

[35] See *Journals*, V, 173.

[36] See Sermon 120.

[37] See Sermon 123.

Appendix I: Selected Sources for the Sermons

Abernethy, John
Physiological Lectures
Æsop
Fables
Appius Claudius Caecus
Appleton, Nathaniel (?)
Aquinas, Thomas
Aristotle
Bacon, Francis
Advancement of Learning
Antitheta
Apophthegms
Essays
Bailey, Samuel
Essays on the Formation and Publication of Opinions
Berkeley, George
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Jacques Henri
Bertholdt, Leonhard
Biber, Edward
Henry Pestalozzi and His Plan of Education
Boerhaave, Hermannus
Book of Common Prayer
Boswell, James
Life of Samuel Johnson
Bryant, William Cullen
"The Old Man's Funeral"
"Thanatopsis"
Buckingham, James Silk
Bunyan, John
Pilgrim's Progress
Burke, Edmund
Letter to Barry
Letters on a Regicide Peace
Burns, Robert
Butler, Joseph
The Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion
Byron, George Noel Gordon Byron, *Lord*
Childe Harold
Caecus: See Appius.
Calisto and Meliboea
Carlyle, Thomas
"Characteristics"
"Signs of the Times"
Cato, Marcus
Cave, William
Apostolici or *Primitive Christianity*
Channing, William Ellery (*elder*)
Sermons
Chesterfield, *Lord*
Cicero, Marcus Tullius
Clarke, Samuel
Clement of Alexandria
Cleobulus
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
Aids to Reflection
"The Destiny of Nations"
"Fears in Solitude"
The Friend
Statesman's Manual
Cornaro, Luigi
Discourses on a Sober and Temperate Life
Cousin, Victor
Coverdale, Myles
Cowper, William
The Task
Cromwell, Oliver
Dante Alighieri
Divina Comedia (Paradiso)
Diogenes Laertius
The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers
Donne, John
Five Sermons upon Special Occasions
Dryden, John
Conquest of Grenada
"On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman"
DuBartas, Guillaume de Salluste, *seigneur*
Devine Weekes and Workes
Du Deffand de la Lande, Marie Anne
Lettres à Horace Walpole
Eckermann, Jacob Christoph Rudolph
Handbuch
Edinburgh Review
Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried
Einleitung ins Alte Testament
Hebraischen Propheten
Encyclopedias
Epictetus
Epicurus
Erasmus, Desiderius
Euripides
Eusebius Pamphili
The Auncient Ecclesiastical Histories
Eyes and No Eyes (Child's Story)
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"WHAT REASONS ARE THERE FOR NOT EXPECTING ANOTHER GREAT EPIC POEM?"

A Dissertation offered for a Bowdoin Prize by a member of the Junior Class, (an Undergraduate). May, 1836.

"That flatters all, and shews herself a friend to none."

by C. S. Wheeler. [Harvard Archives]

The admirers of Mr. Coleridge regret that he did not write his projected epic on the siege of Jerusalem. The sorrow which they express naturally raises the inquiry, whether he could have succeeded, had he attempted such a composition; or, what they conceive to amount to the same thing, whether another great epic can reasonably be expected. Those who believe that "whatever man has done man may do," and assert the efficacy of factitious rules and guides in the production of the epic, will of course maintain the affirmative. Those who think that labor and compliance with rules will be inefficacious without the assistance and inspiration of genius, and that even genius itself must quail before the songs of former bards, ---that the riches in the temple are already full, will as necessarily assert the negative. We profess to believe such a degree of excellence to have been attained, that "the force of Nature can no farther go."

The question can only be settled by inquiring what the chances are that a poem, possessing the characteristics of an epic, will be given to the world, which shall be worthy of being classed with the works of Homer, Virgil, Camoens, Tasso, and Milton. If it should not equal these, it could give the writer no claim to the name of a great epic poet. If it should be as good as even the least of these, it must take its place at their side. It becomes one who wishes to show that such a treasure cannot be expected, to point out what excellences and characteristics they possess, which can neither be equalled themselves, or have their places supplied by corresponding and equivalent beauties. Any thing in the spirit or the tendency of the age, which might be expected to exert an influence unfavorable to heroic poetry would obtain notice in its place, from one who wished to give all the reasons for not looking for another great epic.

The first thing which we are to consider, in examining the Iliad, is the excellence of the subject. Homer used excellent judgment in its choice. An epic poem, according to Mr. Coleridge must be either national or mundane; that is, it must be founded on an event of absorbing interest to the countrymen of the author, or else on one of great importance to all mankind. Milton has chosen a subject of the latter; Homer, as seems most in accordance with the character of the age in which he lived, selected a theme from the former class. The Iliad is founded on an event, the recollection of which must have inspired ardor into the breasts of the Greeks. They would hail with rapture songs which celebrated the praises of themselves, their fathers, and their race. The subject, however, must have been an obvious one to every minstrel of the age of Homer. If he should be denied some praise, on account of its being common and obvious, the consideration immediately strikes us, how excellent his poems must have been, how superior to those of his contemporaries, to have secured to himself an immortality, while even their names are unknown.

But the Trojan War was the proper subject of a great poem, however obvious or common it might be. It was not only an age of glory to Greece, but productive of the most important consequences to her children. Political truths, such as the necessity of unity, were eliminated. Civilization, which is so essentially promoted by the association of different people of various habits and customs, was introduced. These effects, such as the poet might perhaps foresee, were some of the peculiar recommendations of the subject, and would probably have followed in the course of time without his intervention. But Homer by the production of his songs hastened the era of the civilization of his country. He made familiar to all minds those truths in which it finds its warmest support.

To Homer belongs in an eminent degree the praise of invention. When he lived, as we have every reason to suppose, there was no model by which he could form a taste, or perfect a plot. Guided by native judgment and good sense, prompted by the inspiration of genius, he constructed, in an age but partially civilized, the model of a kind of writing destined to form the highest class amongst the productions of the human mind. Now that the model has been presented to us, we can easily see that unity of design is an essential requisite in a great poem: we can see that nothing should be introduced, which has not a bearing on the catastrophe, or the power of throwing light on the character of some of the actors. In short, we can see that everything should be as he has made it. But we may well doubt whether we should have attained so just a notion of the heroic poem, if Homer had never lived. It is easy to see that the Iliad lent much to the Æneid--nay, that the latter would never have been written, had it not been for the former. The most devoted admirers of Milton acknowledge his obligations to Homer, though they believe that Milton could have made his poem as good as it is, without an acquaintance with the Iliad.

In the execution of the work he manifests powers corresponding to those displayed in the invention of the plan. Genius and Taste are as conspicuous in the one as in the other; pervading the whole poem, though it may be true that he occasionally nods. We see them in the simplicity of his style. He wrote for an age of simplicity; and though his poems were calculated to advance his listeners from that state to civilization, yet they are so thoroughly imbued with his genius, as to be not less acceptable to the refined among the moderns, than to the unlearned Greeks.

Simplicity is preserved, not only as a characteristic of the poem, but runs through the construction of the sentences, and seems to guide in the choice of words. It has been well observed that one might as well attempt to remove a brick from the midst of a wall, without leaving a mark of disruption, as

hope unperceivedly to change a word in the Iliad. However carefully one might attempt to conceal the marks, traces of art would remain, which would mar the surrounding simplicity. Coleridge relates that Bowyer, his old schoolmaster, was accustomed to exercise the powers of his pupils, by requiring them to tell why Homer used certain words rather than others, maintaining that reasons could yet be assigned in preference of every word in the Iliad to any synonymous term. The simplicity of Homer coincides with what has been given by some writer, as an adequate definition of poetry,---"the best words in the best order."

Dignity is conspicuous as one of his characteristics. Whatever is the immediate topic, however low or common, it receives from his imagination a splendor not its own. Where the Poet dwells upon the preparation of a feast, the materials and appearance of a female dress, or the long drawn genealogy of some hero, even here he seems to tread Parnassus with the lofty step of one describing a battle. He never turns aside to satire--the antipodes of dignity. Dryden said truly, when speaking of the great epic poets, "The first in loftiness of thought surpassed."

This loftiness of thought is the fountain of that dignity and majesty, which are necessary to sustain an uniform and respectful interest.

Action constitutes another of the particulars in which Homer excels. There is always something doing to keep up the interest. The rapidity of the narrative is only equalled by its particularity. Digressions are uniformly of importance to the understanding of the main story. The regular episode, which seems more in place in a romantic tale, does not occur. Everything has something to do with the anger of Achilles, the reconciliation, or their effects. The last form a legitimate part of the first; the wrath of Achilles is the subject around which the poet has woven the web of his story. Thus action and unity are reconciled.

In the filling up of the plot many beauties occur. Imagination, the power of giving a living colour not their own to the objects of the senses, and fancy, the faculty of representing things as they appear to our organs of perception, are tasked both in the conduct of the story, and the illustration of parts by similes. Each of these powers is necessary in a great poet, since both are necessary to secure the admiration of all. Each of them Homer possessed in a degree which perhaps Shakspeare has alone equalled. The similes are by themselves a source of pleasure in reading the poem. They have been often imitated, yet the reader of more modern poetry, on engaging in the study of Homer, will still see beauties which, flowing straight from the fountains of his imagination, later authors have not succeeded in catching.

His powers of observation ensure him the praise of truth as long as the world stands. Here too he was aided by his imagination. His heroes are not mere individuals, but they are made by the esemplastic faculty the representatives of a class. But they are not therefore more personifications of the passions they were intended to illustrate; they are not, like the allegorical personages of Spenser, forms without substance. The allegorical tendency is analogous to the centrifugal effort; if loose reins are given to it, it carries poesy far beyond the region of delight and interest. It is properly exerted as a counteracting force to the tendency to make the individual the centre of interest. Homer seems to have understood this principle, when applied to poetry, however unacquainted he might have been with the nature of the earth's motion. He shows the nature and effects of unbridled passion in Achilles, not as if he was composed of ferocity and anger alone, nor as if his was the manifestation of individual and peculiar feelings, but as a passionate character might, in accordance with his notions of human nature, appear, when placed in various circumstances. He shows the wildness, the tameless spirit of Achilles, equally in the quarrel for the captive maiden, and in his grief with Priam; modified, indeed, by circumstances, but still ferocious even in sympathy. A writer of less judgment and observation would have made Achilles insensible to the appeal of the old king. But Homer manifests judgment, a knowledge of the world, and an acquaintance with our nature, in short shows the truth of his conceptions, by varying the expression, and retaining the vehemence of passion, in different circumstances. The observations made upon one character will apply generally to all the others; an analogous excellence may also be discerned in the representations of the speeches and manners, both of the Greeks and Trojans. Homer's observation of individual character, made, as it were, into his being by the imaginative power, presents truth---truth, which will endure as long as human nature remains the same.

Variety is an excellence in which he is only equalled by his truth to nature. In the narrative he conjoins unity with the first, without contravening the last. In the coloring of character the same may be seen. He introduces many a hero of pretensions nearly equal to those of Achilles, yet preserves the interest in this last warrior over that felt in the others. It has been well observed that Virgil or Tasso would have felt the presence of so many distinguished characters an overwhelming incumbrance; "yet they all find room to move at large in the Iliad, and each finds ample room to play the hero in his turn."

The good sense of the poet induces a straight-forward way of telling whatever he has to say, which gives another charm to the simplicity of the style. He is not diffuse, though he may be particular. The fertility of his genius is amply shewn by the powers he has displayed in the Iliad alone; and when we look upon him as the author of another poem of nearly equal length, which manifests the same powers exerted in a different direction, we must accord him the praise not only of invention, genius, and taste, but also of those less brilliant though not less necessary attendants, talents and industry.

In placing before the world the product of so much thought fostered by observation, the poet made use

of a harmonious versification. We are able to perceive this; yet when we think how much more appreciable this was in the age of Homer---to those who spoke his language, and were well acquainted with its peculiarities, we shall be ready to acknowledge our inability to form a just conception of his structure of verse.---Occasional adaptations of the sound to the sense have been discovered; but perhaps they were not intended by the author. "The characteristics of the poem are Truth, Good Sense, Rapidity and Variety, bodied forth into shape by a vivid imagination, and borne on the musical wings of an inimitable versification."

And this is the man who is proposed as the model to him who would write an epic poem. Surpass him in his own walk, no one can. However well an epic were written, still the plan, the merit of the invention, the original idea must be attributed to Homer. If an epic poet is not like him, he will not be like nature. If he is, he owes him so much that however superior his work may be in execution, Homer, as the inventor, is entitled to the first praise. But something of the same kind must be presented to the world, the same in conception, though it may differ in the filling up, to entitle the writer to a place by his side. He must possess the attributes of a God, to give him a claim to an apotheosis.

Virgil has produced a poem, of a kind which entitles him to be placed in the same class with Homer; no one who has read both can hesitate to pronounce the Æneid the less noble work; yet there are points in which it surpasses the Iliad. Many of Virgil's happy ideas and similes, as well as the conception of the plan, were borrowed from the great master of song. But to the imitation of so great a model he brought a refined taste and a great sensibility to the beautiful. New ideas had been eliminated by the progress of civilization; and though these were in general less likely to attract admiration than those of an age of simplicity, yet they afforded a rich harvest to a poet of powers sufficient to make them his own. Such a poet was Virgil.

The plot of the Æneid is one of its great excellencies. It is eminently national; one which would interest the Romans and their descendants to the latest posterity. Patriotism, the love of, and the desire of aggrandizing, Rome, pervade the whole poem. By these characteristics he preserves a shrine in the breasts of all who are imbued with a corresponding affection. The regularity of plot gives a charm to the poem, in which the Iliad is deficient.

Virgil is the poet of ancient civilization. The manners of the poem we accordingly find to differ from the simplicity of the Homeric age. Civilization is undoubtedly less favorable to poesy than simplicity; and their different influences might be illustrated by a comparison of the Æneid with the Iliad. Homer had sung of the infancy of civilization; he could not be met on his own ground. A new field of description lay open to Virgil, in portraying the manners of more civilized life. In the description of these we recognize different, it is hard to say inferior, excellences from those we meet with in Homer.

The dignity which he maintains throughout is another excellence. This extends to the plot, the manners, and the language. Though his Gods be not the same exalted beings that we meet with in Homer, yet his respect for excellence in human nature and his praise of human virtue have not less of majesty, than the objects of the elder bard's veneration possess. This is an essential in the epic. The assertion is proved true by the practice of burlesque writers, who make its dignity their butt in the Mock Heroic. Virgil's excellence in this requisite gives him a high place on Parnassus.

The same quality belongs, as was said before, to the diction. His language does not afford more dignified words than he has used to express his conceptions. But it is not inflated; we feel that the loftiness of the epic muse requires it. Nor is polish sacrificed to it: it is hardly possible to conceive, impossible to point out in any writer, a more brilliant union of both in the same performance. Milton's majestic diction is occasionally harsh; that of Pope, smooth and polished, is wanting in this characteristic. It was a felicity of Virgil to unite both in an unrivalled degree. Though there may be some appearances of art, yet they are so slight as merely to indicate, as also do the other peculiarities of the poem, an advanced state of civilization.

Virgil was the first to give mankind a just idea of what Homer's plan would be, when adapted to the situation and history of another country. In this he displayed his genius: and had he written a Latin Poem, which contained no other characteristic excellence, than a faithful transfusion of the Homeric spirit into his native language, connecting it with Roman history, he would be entitled to the praise of a great poet. But since he has added from his own stores so many and so great beauties, and even in some cases improvements upon his model, he must be placed in the lists of heroic fame, only beneath the sightless bards, the first and last of heroic minstrels.

After an interval of luxury, an age of darkness succeeded the light, which so great poets as Homer and Virgil had shed upon the world. During this period little that was valuable in science, or brilliant in art, little that glowed with genius, or evidenced taste, was placed before the eyes of men. But when Christianity came to exert a great and decided influence on Society, a change in the poetry of the times might be expected. That it did not take place earlier than the times of Dante in Italy, and Chaucer in England, is to be ascribed to the partial influence of Christianity. The first preceded Camoens and Tasso by about two centuries and a half; the last lived about the same number of years before Milton.

Camoens makes the main subject of his poem, the Discovery of the Indies by the Portuguese. It is one, not only of national interest to the Portuguese themselves, since their own and their fathers' exploits are commemorated, but in a slighter degree generally interesting to other nations; so completely does the

poem embody, as it were, the Spirit of Discovery which characterized the age. The same spirit prompted Columbus to engage in that enterprise, which has secured an immortality to his name. The Discovery of America has been thought by many a proper subject for an epic. But the success of Camoens must preclude that of a future poet in the same path. There is nothing in the latter subject which makes it better fitted to the purposes of the epic writer than in the former. A great poem must present some distinguishing spirit, some characteristic trait of feeling, to make it worthy of immortality. The Discovery of America furnishes nothing more to an epic poet, than Camoens has already shadowed forth in the Lusiad.

His poem is singular in one thing;--in being the only great literary treasure in his language. He had no predecessors onwhom to model his taste as a Portuguese Poet. He could imitate no great modern epic, in presenting to the world the offspring of a genius, nursed by the study of Homer and Virgil. He was the first poet of any extensive reputation in modern times, to borrow a plan from them: it has been well said of him that "he approaches nearest, without being a servile imitator of the ancients." His plan is regular and one of beauty. His machinery, however, the employment of the Heathen Gods in managing the affairs of the world, has been often censured. In criticising this part of his poem we ought to remember the defence of the author, to quote the translation of it by Mr. Adamson, that "his Gods were secondary causes personified to make delightful verses." He uses the names of the ancient deities as already familiar to his readers, and consequently superseding the necessity of a new nomenclature. They are used merely as machinery. They were probably in Camoens's estimation a legitimate part of the epic. The power which the poet recognized as the real ruling principle of the world, was that which the persons introduced recognized in their conversations with each other:--that which DiGama and his associates hoped to serve and glorify, by a courageous and manly resistance of all the obstacles in the way of their success.

The episodes which are interspersed in the main narrative are in accordance with its unity. The bright parts in the history of Portugal form a proper introduction to the account of the voyage; its greatness is a legitimate subject of remark in the narration of an event, which was to crown the Portuguese with glory. That glory is the object of the expedition, though in conjunction with it, the desire of pleasing heaven may be seen. Thus the episodes of the knights, and of Doña Iñez de Castro, please the mind without distracting the attention of the reader; and it is because they are introduced in the furtherance of the main design, as conferring lustre on the Portuguese name.

Camoens was the first of the epic poets to describe love as a passion. Plato in his Philosophy, and Petrarch in his Prose Works had pointed out its distinction from the appetite. But the conception which the ancients had of love was limited to the appetite, generally speaking. The story of Doña Iñez represents it in the light of a passion. To make this discrimination, or rather to distinguish love from the mere cravings of appetite, however imperfectly it may be done, and to introduce its results into a great poem were points in which Camoens excelled his masters. When we consider this circumstance, the originality of his performances, the beauties of his versification, and the misfortunes which made his life so unhappy, we are compelled to acknowledge that though Camoens holds a place not unjustly among the great epic poets, yet in all human probability he would have been greater--would have avoided the few faults he has fallen into--had he experienced a kinder fortune or lived in age more propitious to the efforts of the muse. He says of the Portuguese of his time--

"Careless and rude, or to be known or know,
In vain to them the sweetest numbers flow:
In vain to them their native poet sings,
And cold neglect weighs down the muse's wings." Mickle.

Tasso has one of the best plots for a poem which can be conceived. It combines the interest of the national and mundane epic. That of the last character predominates. The Crusades, both in their motives and consequences are, and always will be, a subject of attention and wonder to the civilized world. The devotional, almost fanatical spirit which produced them is poetry in itself; the whole history of the Crusades, written in a prose form, possesses many of the beauties which generally characterize poetry. Nor is the interest of such a subject confined to the countrymen of Tasso. It is one in which all claim the right of admiration. The events immortalized in the poem will embalm the memory of the author in the hearts of the enlightened everywhere. For to those events Europe, and, through her, other refined and civilized communities, owe their advancements in knowledge.

But in the adaptation of his plot to all who can appreciate his excellence, he did not forget the claims of his country to an especial remembrance. Godfrey must, to preserve historical truth, be allowed the rank of "capitano." The poet then reserves for an Italian the duty and power of entering the enchanted wood, whence were to be procured the materials of their warlike engines; these engines were necessary to the success of their attacks on the Holy City. A few circumstances of this kind superadd a national interest.

Tasso has still higher and purer notions of love than Camoens. The passion is made a turning point of interest in the Jerusalem Delivered in the same manner as, or rather in a manner analogous to, that love which caused the troubles in the Grecian Camp before Troy. The consequences of passion in one case, and appetite in the other, are obstacles in each to the success of the besiegers. In the unfolding of so divine an affection Tasso could hardly fail of success. The declared lover of a beautiful woman, the poet of a nation which could sympathise in all his admiration of the fair sex, observation and experience would ever prompt his pen in the description of female beauty, and the effects of female charms. The in-

fluence of so new a passion--new to the epic poet, since, with the exception of Camoens's episode, an approach had not been made before to it--might be expected to pervade the poem; we find it everywhere almost,--and everywhere it is a source of interest and beauty. Indeed so far has Tasso preserved these characteristics, that it has made an objection to him, that he sacrifices for them the dignity of the epic. Yet a careful examination of the poem would show us how ready the author is to check the interest, to clog the narrative, when epic dignity is endangered by their unimpeded flow. To speak of love as he has, to make it the life of a story, argues a mind, in which the imaginative powers were only equalled by its delicacy.

To such an appreciation of love the spirit of Christianity was necessary. But the influence of our religion was not confined to the passion for the fair sex. It extended to the love of arms. It made ambition a religious duty---the ambition of distinctinction [sic] in fighting against infidels. However imperfect such an idea of greatness may be, it was, as we shall see, an approach to the true one. The spirit of the age had been and still continued devotional; as such it was embodied by Tasso. Civilization could give birth to an ÆNeid, but the influences of Christianity were tasked in the composition of the Jerusalem Delivered. I do not mean that all-engrossing religion of the Paradise Lost, but a more tangible, more definite quality, which showed that the Christian Doctrines were not yet understood in their purity.

It has been well observed that it is the business of the poet to embalm the spirit of the age in which he lives. He who does this is a great poet, under whatever division, epic, dramatic or romantic, he may come. The form determines the claim of a writer to be considered an epic poet. Ariosto has concentrated the spirit of his own and the preceding age in a chivalrous romance: it is Gothic in its structure, and, so far as a model can be traced, claims the Odyssey as a parent, though it must be acknowledged that the family resemblance is small. Tasso has made the ancient epic writers his models, and preserves the truth of the times equally with Ariosto. The Jerusalem Delivered however does not contain that intermixture of the ludicrous, which spoils to such a degree the effect of the Orlando Furioso. But the Gothic tendency of the age is almost as inviolably regarded in the former, as in the latter. The poet has been censured for giving this a place in the epic. But we must reflect for a moment it was necessary, as the only means of being true to what he wanted to illustrate. Tasso has done what no one of the other poets of Chivalry seem to have been capable of doing. From the mixture of the Gothic with the Classic, he adorns his poem, not only with the beauties of truth and accurate resemblance, but brings into a regular form those which seemed, in the hands of Ariosto, to defy such an attempt.

The versification of Tasso, as well as that of Camoens, are highly agreeable to those who are accustomed to speak their language; our language is but slightly akin to theirs, and consequently it is difficult to judge correctly of it. That of Camoens is stronger, indicating a less polished and less exact tongue. Tasso's is much more elegant and finished, and shows that the Italian had been for a long time a poetical language.

Tasso seems to have possessed true enthusiasm; this he enlisted into the service of the Muses. Aided by a powerful fancy, he throws an intense glow of feeling over every part of his poem. In this earnestness he is surpassed by none except Milton among the epic writers. The ancients in general tell us plain stories, without stopping to point out how wonderful they think them. In Milton we are almost absorbed in this interest, which the poet throws around the objects of his own creation by the force of his imagination. Tasso has a half-way earnestness, a medium between the first and last of the epic writers, which, though it has exposed him to the charge of being all tinsel, gives him a chance at the different kinds of beauty and excellence that they have adorned their immortal works with.

Such was Tasso, and such his poem: to say that he has selected one of the best subjects for an epic is to speak the truth; but it is a slight offering of praise. To say that he has treated that subject excellently, both as an Italian, and as a citizen of the world, however great is not an undeserved encomium.

Milton must close our catalogue of great epic poets. Though it may seem rather arbitrary to exclude some great writers from a place with Homer yet if we should look for others besides the four which have been mentioned, we should be at a loss in the selection. All acknowledge the claims of Homer and Virgil to the name of great epic poets. Camoens and Tasso generally from those, who by a knowledge of their languages, are capable of appreciating their beauties, are placed in the same class. Milton received comparatively little applause during his life. His poetry has in the course of a century and a half grown into estimation, in proportion as the public mind, by the developements of Christian principles in their purity, has become more capable of appreciating him, in the sublimity of his conceptions, and the eloquence of his religion. Besides these there are are [sic] many, who have been hailed as their equals during life, and after death have sunk into oblivion; many who have received the approbation of Academies and distinguished men; many who have for years seemed perfection to their countrymen; none who have attained such a place in the hearts of those countrymen, as permanently to secure their fame.

But the Paradise Lost is, in the opinion of many,"above all Greek, all Roman fame." In selecting a subject Milton chose for the world; and though it may be objected to him that he has done nothing for his country, he has accomplished what is more; he has so interested the men of that country in a subject of general concern, that few of them are disposed to complain of it. Who does not feel a thrill of joy when he reads that Milton, after a deliberation whether Arthur or the Paradise Lost should be his theme, chose the last? and it is the highest and noblest of all subjects; for it "vindicates the ways of

God to Man." Homer and Virgil were national poets: Tasso and Camoens united the national interest with the mundane; it was for Milton to shew that the highest order of poetry is not of that kind, which can be claimed by individuals or countries--which can be circumscribed by lines, but such as all can feel an immediate interest in,---whose spirit is universal, pervading all space and all time. The two first of these poets must be read in the spirit of a Greek or Roman, to catch their beauties; the two first of modern times in that of a fellow countryman, to appreciate their full excellence. But Milton takes up a subject, which national predilection cannot approach. One can thoroughly feel his value and greatness without viewing him through the medium of English sentiment. He speaks the language of the human heart; not that which could have been spoken in any age, nor even in any Christian age, but that which after a just and discriminating mind had once advanced as characteristics of our nature, every body would perceive the truth and force of. The judgment displayed in the choice of such a subject is more than equalled by the genius manifested in the execution of the work.

The dignity and grandeur of Milton have been thought by some so excessive, as to impair the beauty of his poem. But he is simple even in his grandeur. As an instance of this simplicity, almost Homeric, see the end of the Twelfth Book. Here is an example of the combination of two opposite virtues: yet the conclusion of the Iliad is not more simple, more touching. But it is not really dignity, which in the estimation of some is worthy of censure in the Paradise Lost. It is something which they find no authority for in the other epic poets: majestic dignity is found there; sublimity is not; and this, one of the greatest excellences of Milton, the fountain and life of Hebrew Poetry, this has been spoken of as unlovely and consequently unpoetical, because unsustained by Latin and Greek authority.

Milton's familiarity with the Bible, for he knew it better than any other great poet ever did, supplied him with many of his beauties and excellences. Sublimity is of Hebrew origin; the poetry of the Jews is characterized by sublimity. In being the first to adopt that excellence into a modern style, and suit it to the purposes of epic poetry Milton had an advantage, the like of which can never be opened to any future poet. He is the first epic poet who brings before our minds the idea of God, as he is, clothed with infinite Power, Wisdom, and Benevolence. Such a theme could not fail of imparting sublimity to the strains of a genius like Milton's.

A person who meditated an epic previous to the times of Milton might say, the attributes of God yet remain unsung; freedom has no heroic poet--(the freedom of action and will so asserted and illustrated in the case of our first parents); sublimity nowhere exists as an excellence of the epic: the passion of love has as yet been celebrated by no bard in its ideal purity. All this could have been said before Milton appeared. But each of these has now found a worthy minstrel in him.

To the composition of a work on such a subject, with such a moral, and such new influences on the better portion of our nature, Milton brought a taste elegantly formed on the study of Homer and Virgil, a mind stored with the knowledge of his age, and talents of the highest order. He was a man of warm feelings and unbounded genius. Above all he possessed great imaginative powers. It is observed with truth by a late eminent writer of distinction, that no one has borrowed more than Milton, yet his obligations to others are not easily recognized; even though we know the original sources of his poetry, yet when expressed in his language and beautified by his versification, they seem new. Such was the magic of his subjective power: he seems to have made everything a part of himself. This vivifying power was exercised equally over the subjects of his studies and the face of nature; he changed and modified everything, till he made it essentially his own. His powers had little to do with fancy, or the faculty which gives accurate images of objects of the senses; it was imagination which he possessed---imagination of the loftiest kind, which modifies the appearance of objects equally with the subjects of reflection, so as to have them in accordance with the inspirations of original genius.

Homer, Virgil, Camoens, Tasso, and Milton---one of these must be equalled, to entitle the aspirant after epic fame to a place among distinguished epic poets. Now the question in this part of the discussion is whether judging from the excellences of those who have attained this reputation, meager as is the outline here presented of them, whether, I say, we should not be unreasonable in expecting they will be equalled in their own walk by any future poet. The simplicity of Homer, the beauty of Virgil, the all-pervading love of country in Camoens, the interest we feel in reading Tasso, the sublimity of Milton, all tell us that the great and characteristic excellences of epic poetry have found their peculiar bard. He must be excelled, or the aspirant, who founds a claim on a pervading excellence in any of these points, cannot receive a verdict in his favor.

Now let us inquire what would be the effects of a perfect appreciation of the classic and modern excellence in the epic, upon one who meditated such a composition. We have too often heard it said that emulation, a desire to catch up with the great and illustrious men of other times, is a proper and almost the only incentive to greatness in ourselves. We have heard this said too often, I say, because we have come at length to believe it. A person who preaches this doctrine will say that the aspirant will be incited to the attainment of greater excellence. I answer, No; if he is a man of real genius, and acute sensibility, he will feel his own nothingness too much, to strive to equal them. Poetry is like religion in one respect; its warmest votaries are apt to be the most humble. The very excellence of the model will deter a poet of such feelings from engaging in a work, which, supposing the spirit and characteristics of the age were unaltered, he might be successful in, under other circumstances. Mr. Coleridge in his Biographia Literaria has something such an idea as this; that if we set [sic] down to a work, with the feeling that we must do something which shall equal our model, the mind becomes lost in

the contemplation of the excellence and becomes incapable of even its usual action.

We have spoken in the last paragraph of the influence which a proper estimation of the epic poets might be expected to have on men of genius. It remains to say what would be the feelings of a poet, ambitious of like fame, who wanted genius and deep sensibilities. There can be no doubt that he would be fearless of intruding on holy ground, because by the very supposition, he was unblessed with the faculty of discriminating between that and ordinary soil. To him the existence of a great model is everything; without it, he is nothing; with one, he is more than Nature intended him for. But with all the models in the world, and with all the emulation their ambitious souls could muster, men deficient in genius would never give the world a great epic poem. It is as true in poetry as in anything else that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread;" yet a knowledge of this would never encourage an angel to lay aside his fear, or to run the risk of proving himself akin to the ambitious fool, whom he might see crossing the sacred threshold.

If any one asks how Milton, then, could be so bold as to project and write his immortal epic, I answer, because so great a developement of new characteristic motives and feelings had taken place, that he might feel himself not treading on the hallowed ground consecrated by another step, in his labors to "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die." The same remark will apply to the other great epic poets. That there will not be further developements we do not pretend to assert. But it does seem as if the expectation of another great epic poem cannot be justified in the eyes of one who appreciates the excellences of former poets, and is well enough acquainted with human nature to judge of the probability of its being gratified.

Throughout the preceding remarks, the supposition has been made that the spirit and tendency of the present age are as favorable to the interests of heroic poetry as ever they were. The reasons for not expecting another great epic poem were there confined to the difficulty of finding out an acceptable offering to the muse, after her shrine had been enriched with so many pearls above all price. We now meet with some considerations which induce us to say that such an expectation must, to accord with our experience of the progress of Human Nature, not only be not entertained, but ought to be entirely rejected. The preoccupation of ground, which has heretofore engaged our attention, makes the composition of a successful epic an undertaking of the greatest difficulty. The progress of society, which remains to be adverted to, presents the barrier, as it seems to me, of impossibility.

The spirit of heroic poetry is the love of fame and the desire of personal distinction. These were the rewards to be expected for the performance of great actions: and the actions themselves were such as depended upon the physical strength, rather than the intellectual or moral greatness of those who undertook them. Such was the great incitement to exertion in Greece and Rome, and such the motive which, as the highest and noblest one they had, the ancients made the ruling principle of their poetry. The light of immortality, and the hope of happiness brought to light for the good, the beauty of virtue in itself, and the love of well doing for its own sake, were written on pages which were as yet unturned to them. Fame was the great object of life. Aspirations and exertions for it formed the legitimate subject of the highest order of poetry. But this is not the highest principle of action. It was so to the ancients, and that was the reason why their political institutions were not more permanent. If the world were boundless, and the means of attaining fame by subduing external enemies were always at hand to catch the fancy of the ambitious, the ancient governments would still be in existence. But limits were put upon the exertions for distinction by the difficulty of finding other worlds to conquer, after the power of any state had become universal. Fame must still be sought by every soul superior to those of a common mould. External enemies have all been conquered; but the same ruling desire remains; and for its gratification civil wars are entered upon, and the usurpation of a tyrant, or the destruction of political independence by other means, ends the drama.

The mission of Jesus Christ was as necessary to the political as to the moral world; as necessary to temporal as to eternal happiness;---that is, so far as it is allowable to compare the interests of time with those of eternity. That mission has brought to light the great truth that prosperity depends on virtue. The influence of the distinction which it made between national fame, and national permanence and happiness, is intimately connected with our subject, and will be made the next topic of discussion.

An attentive perusal of ancient history shews us that the tendency of things was to grow worse with time. Thus it was with their political condition, and thus with their literature. But under the influence of Christian motives, and in proportion as they were developed and brought into action, the tendency was, and still is, to progress from small to great. England has advanced perhaps as regularly as any nation in the world, in the knowledge of Christian truth. Where do we find a more flourishing kingdom in the world, or one more likely to be permanent? On examining the condition of the other European countries, we shall find in general that prosperity and the probability of its continuance exist to the greatest degree, where our religion has the most general and pervading influence on the lives of men. And the reason is plain. Christianity makes goodness the great motive of action: now in proportion as this prevails over the desire of distinction, national and individual virtue will be promoted: and in these we have learned to look for the only safeguard to political happiness.

Does any one doubt the influence of politics and government on poetry, or its reciprocal influence on them? Homer elaborated one great political truth. He makes the desire of <u>personal</u> distinction the ruling principle of most of his characters. He shows its insufficiency as a motive of action. His whole poem

illustrates the unworthiness of ambition in individuals, to occupy the place which it then had in the world. He pointed out patriotism, the sacrifice of self to the interests of country as the highest virtue. He made unanimity essential to the success of patriots, and thus taught the doctrine that ambition and love of country were incapable of promoting its best interests, unless guided by a spirit of compromise and self-sacrifice.

Virgil makes patriotism the ruling passion of Æneas and his associates. He shows its insufficiency, but differently from Homer. He taught obedience to the sovereign to be the true way of attaining national greatness. And national greatness with him, as well as with Homer, was the great object of honorable exertion. But Virgil's kings were good men. Æneas, Latinus, and Acestes deserved the obedience of their subjects. The poet left his countrymen uninstructed as to their duty, provided the king was a bad man. So long as Rome had good Emperors, she lived in comparative prosperity. But we might as well expect a supply of new worlds to conquer, as a continued succession of good kings.

Tasso and Camoens each make glory desirable, but only so far as the exertions for it coincide with the promotion of the designs of Heaven. Fame is acquired only by accordance with some purpose of God, for the advancement of the knowledge of himself, and of human happiness. It is in Milton that the wicked nature of ambition is set forth. In the fate of the fallen angels, we read the power of this principle to transform almost the equals of God into beings far worse than the worst of men. He shews the impropriety of allowing the love of distinction a place in our breasts as a motive: he is not content with calling it insufficient; he shews that it is positively wrong to allow it any influence, when in possession of so high principles of action as a knowledge of virtue, and a power of securing the Divine favor by practising it.

Now the moral of Milton's poem is what the progress of political science, under the influence of Christianity, has been for ages teaching men. It is the necessity that rulers and statesmen, as well as individuals, should lay aside alike the love of national and personal aggrandizement, and make virtue and religion the great objects of their affection and pursuit. Milton has eliminated this great truth. When reduced to practice, as hope assures us it will be, it will ensure national stability and happiness.

Thus reason, revelation, the history of nations, and the great truths which have been elaborated by the epic poets, all join to shew that the love of distinction is not the highest, the noblest impulse of our nature. Yet this is the soul of heroic poetry. The days we hope have gone by when a poem, owing its life to such a principle, can be written.

The epic poem supposes a war as the theatre of action. Now we believe that the spirit of Christianity is directly adverse to all violence. We do not indeed think every professed soldier a murderer; but we do believe that wars are only necessary during the imperfect developement of Christian principles; that they are only justifiable by the plea of self-defence; and that glory, either national or individual, is an improper incitement to engaging in a bloody contest. The epic not only is conversant with violence, but makes war the noblest occupation of man, peace mere idleness and waste of time, in comparison. Christian principles have already effected a great change. The declaration of war was once a signal for joy. Now the return of peace is hailed as the only source of national happiness and prosperity. The same power which has already effected so much will do more; and war will probably be looked upon by future though distant generations as the greatest curse of their fathers.

Such is the stage, and such the ruling passion, which the epic demands. The question arises "can we say with any degree of certainty that another will not be written?" We are not so utterly Malthusian, as to suppose that heroic poesy would go on flourishing and seemingly to flourish till the end of the seventeenth century and ever after remain stationary. We believe that there is a principle of progress in the human mind. Considerations which have been here advanced induce us to think that it is universal ---that it pervades all human institutions and labors whether political, scientific, literary or religious; that among the ancients the tendency was from good to bad; that among the moderns the reverse is the case.

The particular law of progress with regard to epic poetry seems to be from a certain elevation downwards. Its motion seems retrograde. The Greek and Latin epic poets who succeeded Homer and Virgil are allowed on all hands to be inferior to them. Virgil is less epic than Homer. After the influence of Christianity became general, poetry partook of its reviving spirit. And it is from the fact that poetry and Christianity go hand in hand through the world, that we have had the great truth presented to our minds, that they are the same in their tendency; they "spiritualize our nature."

Every kind of poetry among the ancients grew worse with the progress of civilization. The epic suffered only in common with other classes of literature. This can all be traced to the influence of unworthy motives. But the tendency of the onward principle under the new dispensation is, as we have before said, to make every thing better. What was poetry in those days, when the influence of Christianity was comparatively small in the world? What was virtue? What was political happiness? Compare their condition in the thirteenth Century with that which now exists, and what inferences shall we draw? People are becoming more and more capable of governing themselves. National and individual virtue is more cherished, better appreciated. Works of the imagination are placed before us in a profusion unknown to former times. Imperfections still exist everywhere. But Hope reads in their gradual disappearance a promise of better things. The good which we have received must be ascribed to the influence of our religion. The evils we labour under are attributable to the imperfections of our nature, and the partial develope-

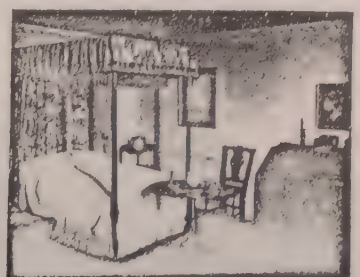
ment of Christian principles. Judging from the analogy of the past, we are bound to believe that the benefits resulting from the diffusion of these principles will continue to increase--to be greater--to be more universally felt. Poetry, as well as every thing else must partake of this blessed influence.

With all this aid another epic cannot be expected. Should a poet arise of powers sufficient to write one,--should he conquer all the difficulties arising from the preoccupation of ground, should he be able to endure a comparison with the five great epic poets, his performance could never be classed with theirs. The heroic poem has long been losing its peculiar character. This change began with the diffusion of pure Christian principles. Camoens, the earliest of the modern epic poets, approaches the ancients the nearest. Tasso has less of the heroic spirit than Camoens. In Milton the form alone of the epic is preserved. This is sufficient, according to a rule stated in the comparison between Tasso and Ariosto, to give the name. But the peculiar spirit will be sought in vain. The heroic character and motives are only introduced, to show their insufficiency, or positively bad influence. Such is the law of progress with regard to the epic. Under the new dispensation it improves in excellence, but it lays aside the heroic characteristics. The form is all that remains in the last great poem. This, we contend, must disappear in the next great effort of the muse. The further development of Christian principles assures us of this. The law of progress which reason and experience point out as pervading human nature and institutions, assures us of it. The substance of heroic poetry has already vanished before the light of revelation; when genius shall again manifest itself--when another great poem shall be given to the world--the form of the epic will be wanting. What will be substituted in its place, it remains for a poet of powers adequate to its conception and composition to determine. Perhaps its characteristics are shadowed forth in the noble philosophical poem of Wordsworth. The Heroic Spirit will then be known by its former brilliant results. We may lament its departure; sorrow may be felt in parting with the glittering but time-fading gem; but sorrow will be lost in admiration of the noble and ever-during treasure, given us to supply its place.

We do not assert, or believe, that another great poem cannot be written. But in order to be great, it must appeal to the highest principles of our nature. It has been attempted in the second division of these remarks, to show that ambition, the principle of action addressed by the epic poet, is not, nor ever can be, at least so long as human nature remains the same--obeys its law of progress--, the noblest and most exalted. As this is the passion which is appealed to in the epic, and making any other a ruling principle destroys this peculiar character, another worthy the name of great cannot be expected. Supposing Coleridge had written a genuine epic, whose composition indicated powers equal to those of Tasso or Milton, it would not receive that appreciation which is the only passport to immortality. It would be contrary to the spirit and tendency of the age. So extensive is this influence of Christianity of which we have been speaking that an epic, should one be written, must take a second place. The first must be reserved for nobler efforts.

The word of God assures us that nothing shall prevail against our religion. Poetry is secure, so long as that is unharmed. Its loftiest and purest flights must be under the guidance of that loftiest and purest feeling. Heroic fame and epic greatness dwindle into comparative insignificance, when we picture to ourselves what may be expected from the efforts of genius, when it shall have been sublimed by the spirit of religion,---when the poet shall address those who are baptized into the same lofty feelings with himself;---when poetic fervor shall find a correspondent sympathy in every breast,---and Poetry, as the handmaid of Religion, shall have purified the affections, and "taught them to behold their God." Ages on ages may first pass away; but a belief in the truth and efficacy of Christianity assures us that time will not end, without a further display of poetic greatness. Such a display cannot take place in all its brilliancy, till men are prepared to appreciate religion in its purity,---to love virtue for its own sake.

We have advanced in the preceding pages some reasons for not expecting another great epic poem. They are based on the difficulty of equalling the splendors of departed bards, and the impossibility that a kind of poetry, whose stage is war, and whose ruling principle ambition, should continue to hold its place as the highest class of the productions of the human mind. But the same considerations which forbid us to hope for the appearance of another epic encourage us to look for an effort of genius, which shall far transcend anything written under the influence of those motives, which to the ancients were the highest. As a less speculative corollary to so long a discussion we have the following;--national literature, as well as national prosperity, stability, and happiness, depend on the diffusion and vitality of religion and virtue.



[The errors in the following dissertation are those of the original manuscript and are deliberately reproduced by the present editor.]

A Bowdoin Prize Dissertation By Horace Morison of the Junior Class, 1836. Obtained the first Junior Prize of Forty Dollars in 1836. HU 89.165.124. Dedication reads: To / Jones Very / An honored friend and beloved fellow student / This Dissertation / Is affectionately dedicated / By / The Author.

WHAT REASONS ARE THERE FOR NOT EXPECTING ANOTHER GREAT EPIC POEM?

Among the many and various opinions, which critics and other writers have expressed on the nature and proper extent of poetry, it would, perhaps, be difficult to find any two, which in all respects agree. This diversity of opinion has given to the general subject of poetry a vagueness and indefiniteness to most other subjects wholly unknown. The very great number of writers upon the subject have only served to envelope it in mystery and darkness. Another attemp[t], therefore, to define it; to precisely point out in what true poetry consists, must be equally absurd and unsuccessful with all preceeding attempts. To pretend to present to view all its characteristics, and to say that these in all cases are the same, would be the extreme of presumption; would be to add another to the already long list of those, who, from the narrowness of their minds, have thought as really to define the productions of genius, as the substances upon which they tread, thus virtually circumscribing the powers of the imagination, limiting the infinite capacities of the soul, and setting bounds to the workings of human passions. The products of genius admit no such definition; they are as unlike, as varied, as the different minds from which they spring, as the different states of the soul from which they eminate. The mind not only developes and manifests itself differently in different ages and in different countries, but even in the same age and in the same country; not only in different individuals, but at different times even in the same. A corresponding difference should be expected, and it is exhibited in the products of the mind, the everlasting monuments of genius.

Though we may not learn what poetry is, and all that it is from the jarring and contradictory opinions of others; yet, by taking what is common to all, we shall possess its more prominent features; though we may not ourselves define it, yet we may know and feel its power; we may know what are the springs, what the chords most sensible to its influence, and thence we may learn much of its nature; its source and its end.

For our present purpose it will be sufficient to define it, by excluding from the definitions of others all that is peculiar to each, and retaining only what is common to all; by setting it forth as all do know and feel its power.

Poetry, then, if it is poetry, is the voice of nature, speaking from nature's impulse. It is the language of nature struggling for utterance, endeavouring to express its feelings, hopes, wants, fears. It is the soul throwing off whatever is facticious or artificial, and going back to the original freedom and simplicity of nature. It is nature, inspiration, speaking with a warmth and harmony, a strength and power, that none can resist; revealing to the soul its capacities, traits, wants and acquisitions. It is nature's perfect image, reflected from a pure and elevated mind; a portraying of its grandeur, sublimity, simplicity, beauty; an epitome of its workings; a painting, wherein the figures are so admirably conceived, so skilfully arranged and masterly executed, as to excite the imagination, surprise and delight the fancy, elevate the mind, melt and subdue the heart, and please the understanding. It is something more than this. It is instinct with life. Itsimages, its characters, its personages, are all living breathing, moving creatures. Such is poetry, such its nature, and its office, whatever else it may comprehend besides. This much all have ceeded to it, while what lies beyond, if indeed there be anything, has ever been the subject of criticism and dispute.

One of the views here presented demands still farther consideration, and a fuller developement, from the bearing it will have upon our future reasoning. It is, that all true poetry is the image of nature reflected from the soul; that it is the language of nature speaking from nature's inspiration; in other words, that it is relative, always adapting itself to times and to circumstances. By adopting this hypothesis, the past changes in poetry are easily accounted for, while with a considerable degree of certainty, we may judge of its present prospects and future destiny. Nor is this hypothesis merely, but a proposition, that admits of direct and abundant proof; proof too of the most infallible kind, that derived by carefully comparing the productions of every age with its spirit and resources, or with the more immediate circumstances, which produced or suggested them.

The songs of Moses, the earliest poetical productions on record, were evidently suggested, inspired, produced, I may say, by the circumstances under which he was placed; by the mighty works, which the Lord had wrought for him and his countrymen. How could he help giving utterance to the might of the Lord, so powerfully manifested in the dashing to pieces of his enemies; from declaring the glory of the Lord, exhibited and shining in the pillar of fire, that was his nightly guide; from exalting the praises of the Lord, by the might of whose power the elements no longer obeyed their laws, the desert was made to yield bread, and its rocks to issue fountains of sweet and wholesome water? These were inspiring incidents, and their effect could be no other, and was no other than rich, genuine poetry. "The cold untroubled heart of stone, like Horeb's rocks beneath the prophets hand", must have yielded, have melted beneath their influence. The prophets, the poets heart, did yield, did melt.

The songs of David, like those of Moses, are the effect of situation, of occasion, of circumstances. The most beautiful and sublime among these are the promptings of natural scenery; the inspiration of his

native hills, of the canopy above him "fretted with golden fire", of the desert around and beneath him, of the bright waters in the distant and extended plain, of the pure, transparent atmosphere which he breathed. Fired by the contemplation of these his soul burst forth into spontaneous praise; it rose to the sublimest description. He beheld the Deity shrouded, as with a garment in the light about him; he saw him riding upon the clouds; he heard him walking upon the wings of the wind. Again, when persecuted by the wicked and compassed about by his enemies, descending from this high train of thought, this lofty strain of prayer and thanksgiving, he would afflict himself with all the scourge and bitterness of complaint and lamentation.

These instances are sufficient for our purpose, though numberless others might be cited for the same purpose and with the same effect. In the same manner it may be shown that their is a distinct vein running through the poetry of every age, corresponding to its spirit and its received notions. This feature is most remarkable perhaps, in the poetry of antiquity, which embodies more of the popular feeling and sentiments, more of life as it was than that of modern times, more of life, because life was then less artificial, more simple, more natural and therefore, more poetical than it now is. But though less remarkable the same is quite perceptible in the poetry of modern times. There is a corresponding difference in all the considerable epochs, in the chivalrous, theological and philosophical ages, that have successively succeeded each other.

Our remarks have thus far been confined to poetry generally, but if it be true that the character and spirit of poetry change with the character and spirit of times and people, then, for each distinct kind there must have been a distinct stage of society, in which there was an appropriateness of feeling, of sentiment, of character. Epic especially, among the other great classes of poetry, requires this appropriateness, and it must have found it when and wherever it has been successfully written.

We have thus far endeavoured to show that poetry is the natural effect of situation and occasion; that it is always conceived in the true and prevailing spirit of its age. Another point intimately connected with this, as well as with our whole subject, is, that every great man is a fair representative of the time in which he lives; that in him is a full developement of its spirit, a glorious concentration of its light, the only difference between him and the multitude around him being, that he is a perfect manifestation of what they are in embryo. This is the favourite doctrine of Cousin, but it rests not upon his authority alone for its truth. It is agreeable to the observation of every one, who goes with his eyes open, or who possesses the least penetration of mind. In all public assemblies, in the transaction of all public affairs, who are they that take the lead; that guide and direct the popular mind; that are its beacon and its pole star? The answer evidently is the great minds there present. These everywhere, like a present divinity, command a respect, a reverence scarcely if ever violated. They maintain a sovreignty, an absolute authority over all beneath them. They transform inferior minds to a likeness, perhaps faint, but yet to a likeness of themselves. Whatever they come in contact with, they newly mould over. They give to it an entire new being; they impart new life, new vigor, new impulses. It matters little what be the progress of society, what the state of civilization, what the form of government, their influence is still felt; the effect is still the same, with the difference that under the most favourable circumstances, it may be somewhat earlier and more powerful. The savage warrior accustomed to deliberate over a fallen enemy; the legislator and counsellor in a free government; the minister of a monarchy, where all is absolute, will each have his influence, if he be truly great; if he have a noble soul, he will have a ruling spirit. If there are exceptions to this they are anomolies, not the natural, not the usual course of things. This is but one instance. All great spirits do not rule in the same way; all are not counsellors, or legislators, or members of public bodies even, as we have here supposed, but if they be indeed great, their influence is there, as it is everywhere.

Though the philosopher confine himself to his closet, he is neither all there, nor long there. His spirit is soon abroad; insinuating its streams through every class of the community; irrigating all as it goes; changing all, want to plenty, barrenness to fertility, a "blank and solitude" of things to rich variety and luxuriance. Though the poet bury himself in seclusion, and wrapt [sic] himself up in the depth of his own thoughts and musings, still if he be great, he cannot long, he cannot wholly remain so. Scarcely will his thoughts get consistence, scarcely receive a created, determinate form, and fall from his lips, or appear on paper, before they will be upon every tongue that lisps, be reverberated from every mouth that utters, touch every heart that feels; before they will do much to transform and renovate, to bring to a likeness of their author, every soul of the community.

This is the effect of great minds upon the ruling spirit of their times. The effect of times upon them, in influencing, maturing and developeing their minds, is scarcely less remarkable.

A great man, like a weaker one, is in some degree the child of circumstances: not to be so is the quality, the prerogative, only of perfect beings. While on earth it is a thing impossible entirely to abstract one'sself, to be entirely free from earthly influences. The mind, that it may develope itself in its full strength and vigor, like the body, must have sufficient and proper nourishment. This nourishment it must derive from the things around it, from the influences under which it acts. If this state of things therefore, and these influences, be essentially corrupt, like slow poisons ministered to the body, they will weaken its strength and vigor, sully its native brightness, destroy its native freshness and purity. On the other hand, if they be truly moral, answering to the soul's innate desires, they will advance its progress, and lend to it something of their own character. Whether circumstances be favourable or unfavourable, therefore, to the advancement and proper developement of the mind, they will have their

influence in its formation; they will impart to it their own character, their own colouring, whatever that colouring, or character may be.

Thus it is, that great minds and the spirit of the times in which they appear, have their reciprocal influence upon each other; that they are continually approximating to an identity, so that without perceptible error, the one may be taken as the representative of the other.

Having here closed the first division of our argument, we shall now proceed to the second viz-- to the enquiry what are the necessary requisites of Epic Poetry, what its character its spirit? -- Our third and last division will be an enquiry into the resources, spirit and prominent features of our own times, together with the prospects of the future, and finally a comparison between these and the requisites, spirit and character of Epic Poetry; of those great models of Poetry, that is, that by common consent have received this name.

To the enquiry what are the requisites of a great Epic Poem, we answer a universally interesting subject, and the introduction of supernatural agencies, or what is usually termed its machinery. We propose to substantiate this, by an analysis of the four great epic models.

First as respects the subject it may be thought extremely doubtful whether that of the Iliad can have any claims to this character, whether the taking and destroying of a single town, like that of Troy, and its consequences be of sufficient importance, to command the universal attention of mankind; to gain their universal sympathy. It may be said that the event of itself is comparitively small and unimportant, greatly inferior to many others, which might be named, and yet, which have no such claims. All this may be most true. Abstractly considered, the event celebrated by Homer may appear unimportant. It may not compare in magnitude with many events of modern times, with the American revolution, or with the short but brilliant career of Napoleon. To a person unread in history; unacquainted with the character of the Greeks, and their importance as a nation at the time of which we speak; ignorant of the little progress the arts had then made, of the few facilities there then were for effecting great things, for crossing a narrow sea even, and sustaining a long siege; to such a person the taking and sacking of Troy might appear a small thing, an unimportant event; but the impressions of such a person would be radically wrong, would be illusions. It would be as if a child should look at the planets in comparison with terrestrial objects, and suppose that they were not so large, because they should not form so large an image upon the eye. Experience in both cases, the exercise of the judgment, which is always necessary to perfect vision and to correct impressions, is wholly left out. In the case of events, as of things, to judge correctly of their magnitude, we must know their distance; we must compare them with approximate events, with surrounding things; in a word, we must transport ourselves to the time of their transpiring, and consider them in connexion with all the circumstances, under which they took place. If we thus consider the subject of the Iliad it will appear in quite a different light from what we have supposed it to appear to one unacquainted with these circumstances. The Greeks and the Trojans were almost the only, they were the most important, at least, civilized people of the age. They were the only people of which we have any correct or definite knowledge. To themselves they were the whole world; to us they are the world that then was. Whatever interest we feel in that age, we feel in them. To raise our interest still more, or to excite our surprise rather, we should consider the small territory which they occupied, the paucity of their numbers compared with modern nations, and then again the thousands which they armed and sent to battle. Homer tells us that the small land of Greece armed and sent upwards of 130,000 men, and 1100 ships. The mighty effort, therefore, necessary for this; the incessantly maintaining of a siege for ten years; a deadly conflict between the two greatest, the two most civilized nations of the earth; all this was not a small thing. It was as if now the old world should rise against the new; as if the Atlantic should be covered with their ships, our coasts swarmed with their armies, and every village, town and city, from the Antarctic to the Artic, should be pillaged and burned. Should this happen, however improbable or however inconceivable it may be, it might not more change the destinies of mankind, the complexion of future ages, than did the event of the Trojan war. The slightest bruise, the merest scratch of the tender plant, may change more the future character of the tree, than a deep wound at a maturer age. The smallest obstacle may turn aside the gushing fount, whose course nothing will stay when swollen to a mighty stream. The subject of the Iliad, therefore, is one of universal interest was at the time of the event which it celebrated; has been to all subsequent ages; is now.

The next great epic poem is the Aeneid. It will be easily shown that the subject of this too, like that of the Iliad, possesses the requisite quality. The Romans at the time it was written were the sovreigns of the world, and all beside were their vassals, or their slaves. They were full of national pride; they were puffed up with national vanity. They were proud of their superior knowledge, of their superior valor, of their superior possessions. They fully felt the importance, the high prerogative of a Roman citizen. Such were the Romans as a nation. Their origin would be, therefore, to themselves a subject of intense interest, and especially so, as it was dressed in a fable, and clouded in uncertainty. As respects ages subsequent to them, it may here be remarked as a principle of universal truth, that whatever people or nation in the history of man form an essential link in the propagation of the species, or in the transmission of valuable institutions to posterity, will be regarded with special interest by all their successors, who either have an interest in themselves, or in man. It need not be argued that the Romans held this rank, when at one time they swayed the scepter, and possessed the learning of the world.

The Jerusalem Delivered if it be called a great poem, of all the four great models perhaps, presents the most difficult problem to solve, but the subject of this too is great and calculated to gain the sympathies of all men. The christian church, though at first small and rejected of the builders, is yet destined to become the chief of the corner; to enlist all under its banners; to bring into its fold universal man. Whatever be the incidents therefore relating to it, they are of interest to all. But it is no common incident, no ordinary event, which the author of the Jerusalem celebrates. It is the rousing up of all Europe; the setting of all christendom in arms; the voluntary self sacrifice of millions in the cause of religion, or rather perhaps, the self immolation of millions at the shrine of fanaticism.

We come lastly to consider the subject of Paradise Lost. To use the words of Adison, "It is still greater than either that of the Iliad or Aeneid; it does not determine the fate of single persons or nations, but of a whole species. The united powers of Hell are joined together for the destruction of mankind, which they effected in part, and would have completed, had not Omnipotence interposed. The principal actors are man in his highest perfection, and woman in her highest beauty. Their enemies are the fallen angels; the Messiah their friend, and the Almighty their protector. In short every thing that is great in the whole circle of being, whether in the verge of nature or out of it, has a proper part assigned it in this admirable poem."

It may be proper here to remark that the partial, or entire failure of many poems may be attributed in part, at least, to the want of this requisite. The Pharsalia of Lucan, the Lusiad of Camoens, the Araucana of Don Alonzo D'Ercilla and the Henriad of Voltaire, are of this number. These may all be read in their respective countries, but yet they are not every where read; they have never been universally hailed as models of their kind.

On the second requisite of Epic Poetry a passing observation merely will serve. It is enough to remark, that by all great critics it has ever been esteemed essential, that it is a part indeed of all the great models. The Iliad, the Aeneid have their gods and their demi-gods; the Jerusalem Delivered its angels and enchanters; the Paradise Lost its devils and its angels.

We pass to the consideration of the character and spirit of Epic Poetry. In both these the Iliad and Aeneid have a striking similarity. The character of both is professedly heroic; they both breathe throughout a martial, a warlike spirit. It could not indeed have well been otherwise. They were written under similar influences, under similar institutions. The times, which they portray, were emphatically the heroic ages of the world. In the history of man they were the vigorous and robust, the proud and boastful days of youth. He had already passed the helplessness of infancy, the simplicity and innocence of childhood, nor had yet arrived at the mature and profound wisdom of manhood. The corporeal system was in its fullest developement, the passions were at their highest flow. These last met with no opposition, suffered no restraint either from reason or religion; nay, they were sovreign over both. Reason was as yet little manifested; her teachings still less obeyed. Religion was little else than the deifying of the passions themselves, than giving them unlimited power, and licence unrestrained, with the authority and titles of divinities. Among these reigned revenge supreme, revenge so insatiable, that misfortune and calamity could not stifle; that death could not quench it. The shade of the departed spirit still called for its victim. At this stage of man's advancement; in this material, this sensual state of things, deeds of valor were made the glory of life, were life itself. In them were placed the end and aim of existence; its enjoyment, its happiness. To the hero they were even more. They in some measure satisfied the inborn, yet misdirected longings of his soul. He saw as it were, reflected by them a faint image of a worldly and earthly immortality, yet this faint image, this foreshadowing of valorous deeds was all he expected, all he hoped of futurity.

This is the character and spirit of the times at which Homer and Virgil wrote. They have embodied the same character, the same spirit in their works. The Iliad and Aeneid bear impress of the same upon their very face; the same are interwoven in the remarks and speeches of their heroes, are expressed in the epithets, in which they so much abound.

The great work of Tasso too, shows much the same character, breathes much the same spirit, as those of his great predecessors. It has been well expressed by another that "in the Jerusalem Liberata of Tasso are summed up all the glories and horrors of the crusades." No where does the author succeed so well as in the description of battles; no where so effectually throw his whole soul into his writings, as in the portraying of the glories and horrors of war. In these he revels as in native element; as if they were in unison with his feelings and his spirit, the delight of his mind. The heroic character, he represents, is not indeed the same as that of Homer and Virgil. It has however the same base. It is the same with modifications.

To all other Epic Poems the Paradise Lost is in many respects an exception. It is characterized with seriousness, rather than heroism; its spirit is that of piety and true religion. The poet had drunk deep at the spring of Helicon, but yet deeper of

"Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God."

His soul was inspired by the muses, but it was yet more inspired by Thee,

"O Spirit that dost prefer
Before all temples, the upright heart and pure."

Milton was thrown upon an age too eventful, amid circumstances too serious to write what is merely light or pleasing. His age holds an important place in the history of our race, and of this he must have been sensible. It was a connecting link between two distinct epochs of the world. It was the last of the days of the heroic character, it was the first of earnest, free and philosophical enquiry. It was an age of discussion, and in this Milton deeply engaged. It was the first dawning of universal freedom, of a true knowledge of the human character.

We come in the third place to consider in connexion with our subject the prominent features of our own times, together with the prospects of the future.

We have already shown that the subject of an Epic Poem should be such as to enlist the sympathies, and excite the interest of all nations and all ages; that to do this it must be relatively great, an event in which are more or less involved the destinies of the whole human race. The present age affords little probability of producing such a theme, the future still less. The time has been, when the destinies of man might depend upon a single nation, upon a single individual. That time is now forever past. The number of nations is no[w] so multiplied, the seeds of civilization so widely spread, the light of knowledge and religion so extensively diffused, that the extinction of a people is no longer connected with the fate of the world. One nation, or two, or many even might be blotted out from the present multiplicity and hardly more be missed, than the extinguished orb of the Pleiades among the hosts of heaven. Whatever, therefore, be the revolutions among nations; whatever their destinies within the bounds of probability, they can gain only the partial sympathy, the partial interest of man; thoy will be unworthy the Epic muse.

The same objections lie against preceding events, unless we go back to the primative ages of the world, and there even, arise objections quite as serious, though of a different character. It is not the subject; it is not the poetry; it is neither wholly one nor both of these in works of antiquity, that everywhere excites in them an interest, and gains them popularity. Time has set his seal upon them, has lent them an endless charm, has imparted to them the power of magic. By them as the sorceress by her glass, we call up the spirits of the mighty dead. We see them, we hear them as really as if we were among them. We see them in the incidents related, in the portraitures drawn of character. This is not all. Simply what the works of the ancients contain, the facts there related, the descriptions there given, the portraits there drawn, is but a small part of what they may be made, of what they are to every attentive reflecting student. If we consider that these together with the character, which is given them and the spirit which they breathe, are all indications of the mind which produced them, and again that that mind into which we are thus led, truly and faithfully portrays and represents its age; if we do this the knowledge, we thus gain, is infinitely more interesting, more useful than that which the works were originally intended to impart.

Far otherwise would be the effect of ancient subjects treated by a modern writer. He might succeed in the invention and arrangement of incidents, but he could never succeed in giving those incidents their proper colouring, in breathing into them the true spirit of ancient life. Subjects thus treated (and it is unavoidable but they should be so treated) subjects however great, thus treated must fail to interest, to please. Like coloured glass the[y] represent things falsely; they belie nature.

We may exhibit the improbability of their ever being another proper subject for Epic Poetry in a different view. Upon a review of the subjects employed by the greatest epic poets they are found to increase in real magnitude as we come down to the present time. The last and the greatest of these is that of the Paradise Lost. In importance, in grandeur, in sublimity, it infinitely surpasses all other subjects, which were employed before it. Nothing superior, nothing equal can succeed it. It is with some plausibility then, we infer that nothing proper for an epic subject adapted to the age will ever again occur.

Another important, essential part of Epic Poetry has heretofore been its machinery. Of this the present age affords nothing, the future promises as little. The fanciful beings of former ages, which held an important place in their poetry, which were at once its frame and its ornament, have all disappeared, have vanished before the present age like spectres at the approach of morn. They now form no part of popular belief, and therefore can make no part of our poetry. Milton has indeed, conquered the utter barrenness of modern times in this respect by steping beyond the verge of time, and the present condition of man. Few may do the same; few subjects well admit it.

The holiest of England's present bards seems to have felt the inferiority of our own to former times in this respect; to have lamented it; to have forbode its chilling influence upon the cause of poetry, when he exclaims

"O fancy, what an age was that for song,
That age, when not by laws inanimate
As men believed, the waters were impelled,
The air controlled, the stars their courses held;
But Element and Orb on acts did wait
Of powers endued with visible form, instinct
With will, and to their work by passion linked."

It may be said, that the want of this requisite of epic poetry in the present age does not preclude the choice of a theme in a different age and adapting to it its appropriate machinery. It does not preclude

such a choice; it does not preclude taking advantage of the popular belief of any preceeding age, but it does prevent the proper, the skilful use of such belief, the converting of it to truly poetical purposes. If used at all it will appear unnatural, affected. As well might the modern dragoon skilfully handle the spear, wield the sword, and use the shield of the Roman veteran, or the artillery man work the mighty engines of Archimedes. All such attempts must prove alike abortive. Every man, every generation of men, have their appropriate spheres. If they go beyond these, they only demonstrate their weakness.

But even more opposed and more fatal to the future cultivation and success of Epic Poetry, than the want of its requisites, are the alien character and spirit of the present age. There is abroad in the world, as universal, I believe, as civilization, a constant, a manifest tendancy to an artificial, mechanical state of things; to an unsympathizing, monotonous manner of life. This is no part of the popular declamation of the day. It is palpable truth. It is one of the misfortunes of our times, and yet it is the almost unavoidable effect of our greatest blessings; of civilization, the advancement of science and the arts. It is the effect of the division of labor, of making occupations permanent professions for life. By this process, life is rendered little else than the continued unvaried pursuit of some one occupation. It is chequered by no exciting incidents; its monotony is scarcely if ever broken; it is begun, lived through and finished in a word, as much by rule, as an attorney would make out an official document, or a carpenter erect an edifice. Nothing is done from impulse, nothing from inherent love, nothing from irrepressible desire. Choice even in every thing is encumbered, fettered, by low selfish regard; by regards to gain, to emolument, to utility in its late and narrowest sense. Thus professions are chosen, thus they are pursued. If these low ends are answered, it satisfies. There is no restlessness of the soul, no loftier views, no holier aspirations, no flashings of genius; no, not so much as an heroic burst of passion, to give variety to impart poetry to life.

This is not all. A life so unvaried, so mechanical, lends a tinge to every thing around, casts a sombre shadow over nature's farest works. To a soul intent on gain, eager only after those sources of knowledge which may be turned to this, the supplying of his wants, or the supporting of luxury; to such a soul nature, with all her magnificence and beauty, is simply a store house. To such "The common air, the earth, the skies" afford no opening paradise, or if they do, it is the paradise of

> "The least erected spirit that fell
> From heaven - - - - - - - - admiring more
> The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
> Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
> In vision beatific."

The study of Physical Science also, which so much characterizes our times, which is made so much the prominent pursuit of the learned, leads to the same cold and chilling views of nature, the source of all that is poetical. It regards her only in a material light. It teaches the properties and uses only of her various forms. Thus it converts, and will more and more continue to convert, like the Gorgon's look, all life and beauty into the coldness and lifelessness of stone. The genius of poetry freezes and withers before its chilling influence, like the blossoms of summer before the frosts and blasts of autumn.

There is yet another feature of our times important as regards the interests of poetry. I refer to the universally prevalent spirit of Philosophical enquiry; of enquiry which penetrates the hidden secrets of matter and of mind, which seeks their properties and their laws, which pries into old forms of government and evokes from them new and improved ones, which is rending the veil of superstition, breaking down the walls of bigotry, clearing away the darkness that has so long shrouded the human soul and exhibiting it in its true light and dignity. Cousin has remarked, that as philosophy is the last and most perfect state of the individual mind, so it is also of society. If this be true, it leads to important results. It teaches that the mind has already entered upon its final career, that it is now assuming its final character, the character which will last it through all the coming ages of time. It teaches if we find not poetry in the present age, that we are not to expect it in the future. It teaches that the heroic and the chivalrous ages are gone, and with them their romance and their poetry. It teaches that the progress of the mind will henceforth be onward, till it shall have arrived at its ultimum, if such a point there be of earthly perfection, till philosophy and religion shall have had their perfect work, till the waste places of the intellectual and spiritual world "shall blosom like the rose". Nor are these pleasing prospects mere results of theory. They are the plain indications of our times. The present great movements of society; the gradual crumbling of old institutions and the building up of new; the fresh light pouring in from every source and upon every subject; the amelioration of the condition of man, each and all, have meaning, have a voice that speaks of the future with the certainty of prophecy. Everything tends to carry on these changes, to keep up the great movements, till the earth shall be regenerated, till man shall become a new creation. Commerce does this, by keeping up a constant interview between distant nations; literature and science, by uniting great minds, by knitting together the hearts of great men; religion, as soon as its true spirit shall be understood, by making all of one spirit of one mind of one desire.

We have said that poetry is r[e]lative, that what is poetry to one, may not be such to another. Let me be fully understood. All poetry is indeed the voice of nature, yet nature speaks a various language, languages understood or not, according to the more or less full developement of the mind. She addresses herself to each and every part of our nature; she speaks to the whole soul of man, and she is understood or not, according as the part which she addresses is or is not developed. Thus, though poetry is immutable in its nature, it is relative in its application and effect. There is the instinctive poetry for childhood, the poetry of love for youth, the ballad the epic for the heroic and the warlike, the deep and grave for the philosophic and reflective, for the soul in its highest stages of advancement. The first three of these have already characterized their respective ages of the world. May we not say also, that the present age is characterized by the last, and if so, why may we not judge of the future destiny of poetry with almost prophetic certainty?

A Bowdoin Prize Dissertation by Jones Very of the Senior Class, 1836. First Senior Prize award. Very's dedication reads: To / Samuel Tenney Hildreth / This Dissertation, / As a tribute of love and esteem, / is inscribed / by / Jones Very. [Compare this text with that of the published version, reproduced infra.]

[HU.89.165. 123]

WHAT REASONS ARE THERE FOR NOT EXPECTING ANOTHER GREAT EPIC POEM?

The poets of the present day who would raise the Epic song cry out, like Archimedes, of old "give us a place to stand on and we will move the world." This is as we conceive the true difficulty. The poetical lever has with every successive generation, from the time of the great father of heroic poetry, lengthened; until, at last, the spot from which the earth is to be moved seems to be far beyond the reach of mortal ken lost in the dim obscurity of the Infinite. Before entering upon the argument we will dwell a moment upon this remark, that we may present it more definitely to the mind.

To men in the early stages of society their physical existence must seem almost without end; and they live on through life, with as little reference to another state of being, as we ourselves do in childhood. To minds in this state there was a remoteness in an event, which had taken place one or two centuries before, of which we cannot conceive; and which, as regards distance, rendered the taking of Troy, a fit spot, from whence Homer might influence his age--a fit subject, which, for this reason just stated--would prove the centre of attraction to the excursive minds of the Greeks. If to these advantages possessed by Homer we add those, which belonged to him from the religion of his times, and from tradition, whose voice is to the poet more friendly than the plain-written records of history; we must confess that the spot, on which Homer built up his scenes of heroic wonder, was peculiarly favorable. The advance, which the human mind had made towards civilization, prevented Virgil from making a like impression on his own age. To awaken admiration he too was obliged to break from the bonds of the present, and soar beyond the bounds of history before he could throw his spell of power over the mind. Why had he less influence? Because he could not like Homer carry into the past the spirit of his times. To the enlarged minds of Virgil's day the interval between the siege of Troy and their own time did not seem wider, than it did to those, who lived in the time of Homer. The true distance in time was chosen by each; but the character of Æneas did not possess those great attributes, which could render it the Achilles of the Romans. Lucan, while his characters exhibit the true heroic spirit of his age, fails of giving to them their due influence from the want of some region of fiction beyond the dominion of history, in which to place them; he cannot break from the present without violating every law of probability. To escape this thraldom, and to reach a point from which the heroic character of their age might be seen dilated to its full height, modern poets have fled beyond the bounds of time, and woke the echoes of Eternity. It was from this point only that the christian world could be moved, it is only in that region without bound, that the heroism of immortality can be shown. Milton and Dante choose this spot, on which, with almost creative power, they might show to mankind worlds of their own "Won from the void and formless Infinite;" and from which their own heroic spirits might be reflected back upon their own times in all their gigantic proportions. But such has been the progress of the human mind since their time, that it would seem to have reached already another stage in its developement, to have unfolded a new form of the heroic character--one which finds no paradise, nay no heaven for itself in the creations of Milton, and for which the frowns of Dante's hell have no terror. This new page of the heroic character naturally leads us to enquire, whether we are to have no great representation of it, no embodying of this spirit in some gigantic form of action, which shall stalk before the age, and by the contemplation of which our minds may be fired to nobler deeds.

In considering this question we shall endeavour to show what reasons there are for not expecting another great Epic poem--drawn from the principles of Epic poetry, and the human mind--and that these present an insuperable barrier to the choice of a subject, which shall exhibit the present developement of the heroic character in action. ——

In doing this I shall exhibit by an analysis of the Iliad, the true model of an Epic poem,—its origin and peculiarities, and in what manner those peculiarities have been changed, and at last lost by succeeding poets, according to the developement of the heroic character in their several eras——

I shall thus be led to show, that the taking away of the peculiarities of Epic interest, and the final merging of that interest in the Dramatic, is the natural result of the influences, to which the human mind, in its progress, is subjected; and that that influence, while it precludes all former subjects from representing the present developement of the heroic character, throws at the same time an insuperable barrier in the way of any subject.——

Looking upon Homer, at least as regards the Iliad, as a single man, speaking throughout with one accent of voice, one form of language, and one expression of feeling, we leave to the framers of modern paradoxes the question--whether this name is a type or not; --and proceed to consider what might be the probable origin of the Iliad, and what it is, which constitutes it the true model of an Epic poem--a more perfect visible manifestation of the heroic character, than can be again presented to the eyes of man. Homer was, as every great poet must be, one of the wisest men of his age. Gifted by God with a mind to judge, and a heart to feel beyond others of his own time, he must have been lead [sic] by that mind and heart to the conception of forms of beauty and heroism, which he had in vain sought to find realized among those around

him. To such a mind the Trojan war would naturally present itself, as a scene where his imagination might find a home, in giving to the heroes it had evoked from the past those high forms of daring, with which his soul was ever dilating. 'Twas his own heroic soul, which led him to the choice of his subject; and to give it that influence, which it has exerted for more than two thousand years.

In a philosophical analysis of such a poem as the Iliad or Odyssey, made with reference to its Epic peculiarities, there is great danger of misconceiving the history and character of early heroic poetry; thus giving to the poet a plan which he never formed, or a moral which he never conceived. In ascribing that origin to the poem, which we have given, we have spoken only of those principles of the human mind, which are independent of its progress, and whose action is the same in every great poet--in speaking also of the plan we shall follow the same rule, judging that the simplest conception of it must be at the same time the most accurate and just.

Wandering, as his active imagination must have led him to do, in the by-gone days of heroism, Homer must have been led by the fitness of the materials presented to him in the siege of Troy, by their remoteness from his own time, and the interest with which they would be viewed by the mass of his countrymen, as de-[s]cendants of the Grecian heroes, to the choice of a subject, which seemed to present a worthy form, in which to manifest the workings of his own noble spirit. His enthusiasm would doubtless prompt him to the execution of detached parts, before he had completed his general plan; and the various incidents, which constitute so much of the charm and interest of his poem, as they suggested themselves to his mind would also direct him to the great point, round which they all revolved. The influence upon the several parts, resulting from the contemplation of the chief character, would thus give all the unity to the subject, which we find in fact to belong to the earliest forms of a nations poetry. Passion to excite sympathy, variety to prevent disgust, told in a free and fluent stream of nar[r]ative verse--not the intricacy and dove-tailing of modern epic,--is to be looked for in the Iliad; for it was not made, like a modern epic, to be read in our closets "ab ovo usque ad mala", but to be presented only in fragments before the minds of an audience — Thus the single combats of Menelaus and Paris, the funeral games of Patroclus, and the restitution and burial of the body of Hector are generally complete in themselves, yet having an obvious connexion, as still telling the same great tale of Troy. So much for the origin and fable of the Iliad.

The genius displayed in its grand and comprehensive design is only equalled by the judgment manifested in confining the action to the busiest and most interesting period of the Trojan war; in thus uniting in his plan, and bringing forward in his details, every thing which could lay hold of the affections, the prejudices, and vanity of his countrymen. Of his characters we need only say, that their truth to nature has been a subject of admiration and wonder to every succeeding age. Like those of Shakspeare, they are stamped with nature's own image and superscription. Though all are possessed of valor and courage, yet they are so distinguished from one another by certain peculiarities of disposition and manners; that, to distinguish them, it is hardly necessary to hear their names. Achilles is brave, and Hector is brave; so are Ajax, Menelaus, and Diomede;--but the bravery of Hector is not of the same kind with that of Ajax; and no one will mistake the battle-shout of the son of Atreus for the war-cry of Tydides.

Homer's machinery, as all epic machinery must be, was founded on the popular belief in the visible appearance of the gods; and, on account of this belief, he was not less favored by the circumstances, under which he introduced his gods, than he was by those which enabled him to represent his heroes. It cast around his whole subject a sublimity, which it could not otherwise have had; giving occasion to noble description, and tending to excite that admiration, which is the leading aim of the epic poem.

We have made this analysis of the Iliad, to show in what way all things combined in Homer's age, to assist him in giving a perfect outward manifestation of the heroic character of his times. He wrote in that stage of society, when the mind's intuitions of the universe were all sensuous, when the soul was fettered by the senses, and its energies lived and moved in their visible effects. The Greeks lived only for their country, and drew every thing within the sphere of their national views. Their highest exemplification of morality was patriotism. "The world," as Milton says of our first parents, "was all before them" not within them--and their mission was to go forth, and make a material impression on the material world. The soul of Homer was the mirror of this outward world, and in his verse we have it shown to us with the distinctness and reality of the painter's page. Lucan calls him the prince of painters, and with him Cicero agrees, when he says--"Quae species ac forma pugnae, quae acies, quod remigium, qui motus hominum, qui ferarum, non ita expictus est, ut quae ipse non viderit, nos ut videremus effecerit?" It is needless, perhaps, to say that this state of the mind gives both the reason and excuse for those many epithets, which a false criticism, and a false delicacy of taste is so fond of censuring. Such critics would blame the poet for praising the physical strength of his heroes; in short, for representing his gods such as they were believed to be, and painting his warriors such as they were. This state of things gave to the Iliad and Odyssey that intense epic interest, which we fail to find in later heroic poems. As the mind advances, a stronger sympathy with the inner man of the heart is more and more felt, and becomes more and more the characteristic of literature. In the expanded mind and cultivated affections a new interest is awakened before unfelt; dramatic poetry succeeds the epic, thus satisfying the want produced by the farther developement of our nature. For the interest of the epic arises, from the contemplation of certain objects grand and beautiful in themselves; but that of the drama, from sympathy with the passions and feelings of others awakened by such objects. Though Homer has given variety to his poem, by the introduction of dialogue, and thus rendered it, in one sense, often dramatic; yet we find it is the mere transferring of the narration from his own lips to those of others. The interest is still without, it is the interest not of sentiment but of description. Through the hero we see his object, and our minds are as strongly fixed on it as his

own. "Men's minds," as Shakspeare has somehwere said, "are parcel of their fortunes," and his age was necessary, and alone suited to the mind of Homer. Man viewed himself with reference to the world; not, as in the present day, the world in reference to himself; and it was this state of mind, which then made the taking of Troy the point of epic interest.

We have thus endeavoured to show, that the manifestation of the heroic character in the time of Homer was perfectly exhibited in outward, visible action; and that this reflected from the soul of the poet, addressed to a seeing and listening, rather than a reading people, was the poetry of fancy rather than sentiment. The events, the characters, the superstitions, the customs and traditions, all combined in rendering the Iliad a perfect embodying of the perfect outward manifestation of the heroic character of that period. The poetry of the senses--the reflection merely of physical nature--is not susceptible of indefinite perfection--the germ of the infinite is wanting; and this it is, which gives to the early poetry of every country a kind of perfection, which can never afterwards be obtained. The epic poetry of the Greeks corresponds to sculpture; and in the one, as in the other, the outward forms of life and action live unrivalled. There, as in their own Apollo, speak the visible manifestations of the infant soul colored by the hand of Nature.

It is not our purpose to show the adaptation of the rules of Aristotle to the Iliad, since from this those rules were drawn--we would only say that, according to the spirit of those rules, every true epic must be formed. They are not the arbitrary decisions of a critic, but the voice of nature herself speaking through her interpreter. Aristotle studied nature in Homer--he gave no arbitrary rules--he did but trace the pleasing effects produced on the mind, and taught upon what those effects depended. He may have erred in drawing his rules from one developement of the heroic character; but this was the fault of his times, not of his judgment. He did not mean that succeeding poets should bow to him; but should reverence those great principles, to which he had shown that Nature herself had conformed in her noblest work. The true poet will look <u>without</u> for no rules drawn from others; he feels within himself the living standard of the great and beautiful, and bows to that alone--as far as it has become changed by human error or imperfection, he would gladly restore it to its original purity by a conformity to those universal laws of sublimity and beauty, which the critic has shown to be followed by nature herself.

When Aristotle tells us that the action of an epic should be one, and entire, and that it should be a great action,--he tells us of what constitutes its essence, and of that, without which it ceases to be such a poem. It must be one and entire, that the interest may not be distracted; and that the mind may feel the harmony of all its proportions. It is not the poet of fancy, who can bind by his spell the parts of such a fabric--it is the poet, who has felt more strongly than any other the great moral wants of his age, that can give to such a work its unity and power. It is the gift only of the might[i]est spirits of our race: and it is he only, who has felt, like them, the harmony of his own soul that can stamp it upon the creations of his mind. It cannot be a studied or mechanical unity; it must be as much the effect of inspiration, as the images or sentiments of the work. In reading the gay creations of Ariosto--his fairy bowers and castles and palaces--we are, for a moment, charmed and wrapt in pleasant reveries; but they are but dreams, the impression is soon shaken off, we are conscious of no master-feeling round which they gather; and which alone could render his poem, an epic,--the noblest of harmonious creations. But in reading the Iliad, or a tragedy like Lear or Macbeth, or in looking some time at a painting, on which the moral sentiment of the artist is as strongly impressed as his imagination; instead of being obliged to humour the fancy that the charm may be kept alive, we shall with difficulty shake off the impression, when it is necessary to return to the real business of life.

It is in the greatness of the epic action that the poets succeeding Homer, if we except Milton, have failed; and the causes, which have operated against them, will always operate, with increasing force, against every attempt to represent the present, or future developement of the heroic character in action. It is in the childhood of the mind alone, that the interval between thought and action is the widest, and, therefore, it is then alone that the events occupying that interval can be best described. The great struggle of the epic poets since the time of Homer has been against this narrowing of their field of action; and making the instruments there employed less visible, less tangible. The wonder and interest of the world is being transferred to the mind, whose thought is action and whose word is power. Lord Kaimes, therefore, erred when he said, "that it was the <u>familiarity</u> of modern manners, that unqualified them for epic poetry; and that the dignity of present manners would be better understood in future ages, when they are no longer familiar." The fact is our manners, or the manners and actions of any intellectual nation, can never become the representations of greatness--they have fallen from the high sphere, which they occupied, in a less advanced state of the human mind, never to regain it. Greatness of action is no longer that of the physical, but of the intellectual and spiritual being. The pen--how insignificant as a physical weapon--when compared with the spear!--yet this it is, that governs and serves, works and rewards, fights and feeds, blesses & curses for us.

These remarks will show why it was that Virgil failed in making the same impression on his age, that was made by his great model. His poem is but a lunar reflection of the Iliad; and it was, perhaps, from a deep consciousness of this that he ordered it, in his will, to be burned. That poem, which was the natural expression of the early features of society, could only be faintly copied by the mimic hand of art. Virgil's subject is well chosen, and would not have shown with reflected light, had it been treated of in the early days of Rome. He summoned from their long sleep the heroes and gods of Troy, but they appeared with dimmed glory amid the light of another age. He had, as we have before observed, chosen the right point in time for his action; a time of tradition affording him all the advantages possessed by Homer, but, not to transgress the laws of probability, he could not give his hero the character of another age, he could not make Æneas the Achilles of the Romans—

—"Sequiturque patrem non passibus æquis."

Virgil, as well as Lucan, has been blamed by the critics--the one, for not giving to his hero the dignity of thought becoming the heroic character of his own time; the other, for not placing his action beyond the strict bounds of history. In regard to each we think the critics have erred; for neither the time, nor the characters could have been changed without producing a strange incongruity.

Thus the epic poets of Greece and Rome who succeeded Homer, must have labored under peculiar disadvantages, to which those of modern times are not subjected. If, like Virgil, they had chosen the same time for their action with Homer, they could not transfer to it the heroic spirit of their own day, at least in its noblest development-- they could not make a Cato or a Brutus cotemporaries with an Achilles or an Ajax--they must evoke the heroic spirits of other days, spirits reluctant to obey the spells employed by the magicians of another age. Virgil, as well as every other poet, whose action lies in times very far distant from his own, has not the greatest difficulty to overcome in exhibiting characters moved by those same affections and sympathies, which unite the ceaseless generations of men--in giving to the slumbering past the emotions of the present--but in adapting to the story of a former age, and perhaps foreign nation, that peculiar system of manners, which constitu[t]es the outward developement of the then heroic spirit; and of which no mind, but such as has been subjected to its actual influence, can either strongly feel, or vividly describe. These manners perish with their age--there is no hand of enchantment to wave over them, and convert them, like the fabled city of Arabian romance, into living stone; no convulsion of nature, like that which covered Pompeii, to wrap them in a veil, which future ages might withdraw, and permit them, untouched by the hand of Time, to stand unimpaired amid the ruins of the past, and gaze with wonder on the new-risen generations of men.---- But if, like Lucan, they took their subject from the hands of History; the scepticism of a more advanced age deprived them of the use of machinery; and consequently of the power of exciting that admiration, which is the leading aim of an epic poem. We need not stop to show how ridiculous Iris would have appeared on the plains of Pharsalia, bringing a sword to Pompey; or Venus coming to snatch him away in a cloud. It is evident that the poet, forced to follow in the same path with the historian, must feel the bonds of reality continually restraining and checking his native energies.

These difficulties the influence of Christianity overcame, but subjected the epic poet to others still more discouraging--as I shall endeavour to show, by a brief reference to Tasso, Dante, Milton, &c.

The subject chosen by Tasso, and the time of the action of his poem bore the same relation to christian civilization, as Homer's did to Grecian. It was the only age, in which the heroic christian character could be fully manifested in outward action. This resulted from a peculiar state of the mind, which, as we have said in regard to heroic manners, perishes with its age, with the circumstances that calls [sic] it forth. It was a new developement of the Homeric spirit modified by christianity. The interest, as in the Iliad and Ænead, is all without, and this it is which gives to the poem of Tasso, as to the other two, the true epic interest; and adds a dignity to the manners of these poems belonging to no other, where the subject is taken from the common events of life. The subject too, as it presented a scene for the display of action resulting from a purer faith, possesses a dignity far surpassing that of his two great predecessors. Thus fortunate in his subject, and the time of his action, he was equally favored by the popular belief of his age. By the superstition of his own time he was enabled to oppose with success the light of reality, which was thrown around his subject by history; and give to it that supernatural interest, which is found so capable of exciting admiration. However, in our cooler moments, we may laugh at his magicians, and their incantations; as they are not mere embodied abstractions, like Voltaire's agents, but founded on the actual belief of his day; they will always possess a reality to the mind; and when in reading we have yielded for a time to our feelings, will again assert their power. We have placed Tasso before Dante in order of time, because he has given an earlier developement of the heroic character. He would doubtless have possessed, as well as Virgil, whom he has so closely followed, greater originality; and more strongly exhibited that developement had he lived nearer the age he endeavoured to portray.

The effect of Christianity was to make the individual mind the great object of regard, the centre of eternal interest; and, transferring the scene of action from the outward world to the world within, to give to all modern literature the dramatic tendency--and as the mind of Homer led him to sing of the physical conflicts of his heroes with visible gods without; so the soul of the modern poet, feeling itself contending with motives of god-like power within, must express that conflict in the dramatic form, in the poetry of sentiment. This tendancy [sic] of Christianity to make man the great centre of interest, instead of some outward object, exhibiting his strength in action, will be seen to be the prevailing principle, which led to the selection of the subjects of all the great epic poems of modern times. The poem of Tasso forms the only exception to this remark; and this, as we have shown, does but confirm our observation; for it represents the mind essentially pagan, yet moved by Christianity, and finding, like the Greek, all its motive for action without. The interest of the poem is consequently much less than those, which exhibit the later developements of the christian heroic character.

By removing the bounds of time Christianity has, I think, rendered every finite subject unsuited for an epic poem. The christian creed in opening the vista of eternity before the poet's view, and leaving him unrestrained by prescriptive forms; while it freed him from the bonds of history, by giving him a place beyond its limits, where he might transfer the heroic spirit of his age, and surround his heroes with supernatural agents capable of raising for his action the highest admiration,-subjected him to a far greater difficulty, than any yet experienced by former poets,-that of finding a subject, an action to fill those boundless realms of space, and call forth the energies of the spirits that people it. In considering the efforts, which christian poets have made to overcome this difficulty, and bridge the space between time and

eternity; we shall find the great reason for not expecting another attempt so successful, as that made by Milton, arising from circumstances, which have rendered the difficulty far more formidable since his time.

If we consider Tasso as having chosen a subject exhibiting the first developement of the christian heroic character, the poem of Dante will exhibit to us the second. Though not an epic, if viewed with reference to classical models, whose aim and spirit were intrinsically different from any produced since, it will serve to show how the genius of Dante overcame the difficulty we have mentioned. His poem is unique, but produced under circumstances, which would have rendered it, if the obstacles we have alluded to had not opposed, a regular epic poem. It had its origin, like other sublime works of genius, in that desire, which is continually felt by the greatest minds of giving to their age a copy of their own souls; and embodied the vague but universal spirit of the times when it was written. Its foundations were the popular creed of all Christendom; its supports, the deep reasonings and curious subtleties of countless theologians; and the scenes it represents, such as had long formed the dreams of many a monk on Vallambrosa, and perhaps entered into the sermon of every preacher in Europe.

Thus although the circumstances, which gave birth to Dante's poem were, if we may so say, epic; yet the form, which that poem took shows the hostility, which the christian influence has towards the strictly classical model. That influence had already divested of its greatness every subject like that of Homer's or Virgil's; and turned upon himself as an individual, the interest which man in their times had given to the outward world. Could intellectual power be represented with the same objectiveness as physical power, there might be as many epics <u>now</u> as there are great minds to influence. But as this seems, from the nature of things, to be beyond the grasp of genius; and it is almost equally impossible to gather round an individual that pomp and circumstance of war, which Homer brought around Troy; Dante was constrained to give that form to his poem, which it took. Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven had long been considered as the seperate [<u>sic</u>] states, in which vice and virtue would meet their fitting reward---this belief had been taught by signs and emblems, and they had been made to learn, rather through the medium of their senses, than the silent arguments of conscience,"accusing or excusing itself," what were the rewards and punishments of the future world. This material developement of christianity it was Dante's mission to hold up to his age (that is—that developement which made man as a physical being the object of interest) and upon that age it must have had, and did have its greatest influence; for it was produced by the power of materiality, which is lessened with every advance of the christian character. His poem plainly shows that the tendency, which christianity gave to poetry, was not to the epic, but to the dramatic form; and, if it freed the heroic poet from difficulties, to which he was before liable, it also exposed him to another, which, although evaded by Milton, must in the end prove fatal.

The next, and highest developement of the heroic character yet shown in action was that exhibited by the sublime genius of Milton. The mind had taken a flight above the materiality of Dante; and, resting between that and the pure spirituality of the present day, afforded him a foundation for his action. He could not adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system, and he therefore raised his structure on the then debateable ground. The greatest objection which our minds urge against his agents is the incongruity between their spiritual properties, and the human modes of existence he was obliged to ascribe to them. But this is an objection of our own times, of men requiring a more spiritual representation of the mind's action, which, if it cannot be given, must preclude the possibility of another great epic. In fact Milton's poem but confirms more strongly the conclusion we drew from Dante's, that <u>dramatic</u> is supplying the place of <u>epic</u> interest. His long deliberation in the choice of a subject suited to his conceptions shows the <u>difficulty then</u> laying in the way of an epic; and his first intention of making Paradise Lost a <u>tragedy</u> shows <u>whence</u> this difficulty originated. The tendency of the mind, to which we have before alluded; and which had grown yet stronger in Milton's time than before, compelled him to make choice of the Fall of Man as his subject, a subject exclusive in its nature, being the only one which, to our minds, possesses a great epic interest. The interest of his poem depends upon the strong feeling we have of our own free agency, and of the almost infinite power it is capable of exercising. An intense feeling of this kind seems to have pervaded Milton's whole life, and by this he was probably directed in the choice of his theme. We find in his "Speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing," written many years before the conception of his poem, a sentence confirming this supposition. "Many," says he, "there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose; for reason is but choosing. He had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience, or love or gift, which is of force." This feeling becomes stronger the more the mind is influenced by christianity; and this it is, which has transferred the interest from the outward manifestation of the passions exhibited in the Iliad to those inward struggles made by a power greater than they to controul them---and cause them, instead of bursting forth like lava-torrents to devour, and blast the face of nature, to flow on like meadow-streams [<u>sic</u>] of life and joy. Why then it may be asked do we take an interest in Homer's heroes, whom the Gods are ready every moment to shield or snatch from the dubious fight? Not, I answer, because we consider them mere machines, acting but from others' impulses; for <u>then</u> we could take no interest in them, but because, when

> "Arms on armor clashing bray
> Horrible discord, and the maddening wheels
> Of brazen chariots rage;"

we give to them our own freedom; or because the gods themselves, whom Homer has called down to swell the fight and embodied in his heroes--because <u>these</u> create the interest, and make what were before mere puppets free agents. When, in our cooler moments, we reflect on his Jove-protected warriors, his invulnerable

Achilles, they dwindle into insignificance; and we are ready to exclaim, in the quaint language of another, "Bully Dawson would have fought the devil with such advantages."

This sense of free agency is what constitutes Adam the hero of Paradise Lost; and makes him capable of sustaining the immense weight of interest, which in this poem is made to rest upon him. But that which renders Adam the hero of the poem makes Satan still more so; for Milton has opened to our gaze within his breast of flame passions of almost infinite growth burning with intensest rage. There is seen a conflict of "those thoughts that wander through eternity," at the sight of which all sense of the material terrors of that fiery hell around him is lost; and compared with which the physical conflict of the archangels is a mockery. It is not so much that battles present less a subject for description, than they did in the times of Homer, that they fail to awaken those feelings of admiration they then did; but because we have become sensible of a power within, which bids the tide of war roll back upon its fountains. For the same reason it is, that the manners of civilized nations are unsuited for heroic song--they are no longer the representations of greatness--for the heroism of Christianity is not seen so much in the outward act, as in the struggle of the will to controul the springs of action. 'Tis this which gives to tragedy its superiority over the epic at the present day; it strikes off the chains of wonder, by which man has been so long fettered to the objects of sense; and, instead of calling upon him to admire the torrent streams of war, it bids the bosom open whence they rushed, and points him downward to their source, the ocean might of the soul

"Dark--heaving--boundless, endless, and sublime--
The image of Eternity--the throne
Of the Invisible."

Thus Milton's poem is the most favourable model we can have of a Christian epic--the subject of it afforded him the only field of great epic interest, where the greatest power could be shown engaged in bringing about the greatest results. Adam is not so much the Achilles, as the Troy of the poem. And there is no better proof that greatness has left the material throne, which she has so long held for a spiritual one, than that Milton, in putting in motion that vast machinery, which he did to effect his purpose, seems as if he made, like Ptolemy, the sun, and all the innumerable hosts of heaven again to revolve about this little spot of earth. Though he has not made the Fall of Man a tragedy in form, as he first designed; he has yet made it tragic in spirit; and the epic form it has taken seems but the drapery of another interest. This proves that, however favoured by his subject the epic poet of our day may be, he must, by the laws of his own being, admire himself; and give that, which Bacon calls an inwardness of meaning to his characters, which, in proportion as the mind advances, must diminish that greatness once shown in visible action. The Christian knights might well exclaim, when they first saw gunpowder used in war,--as Plutarch tells us the king of Sparta did, when he saw a machine for the casting of stones and darts,--that it was "The grave of valor." They were the graves of that personal valor, which is shown in its perfection in the infancy of the mind; and which is imaged in the pages of Homer. In modern battles the individuality of early times is lost and merged in one great head, with reference to which we view all results. The men, upon whom the superior mind acts, are mere mechanical instruments of its power; and the deeds seen by the outward eye are thus dimmed by the soul's quicker perception of spiritual action. Thus the intellectual power wielded by the commander seems already to have decided the battle; and we look with less interest upon his armies' incursions into the territory of an enemy, "Quippe qui," as Sallust says of Jugurtha, "totum regnum animo jam invaserit."

To complain of this tendancy of the human mind and its influence on literature, to sigh that we cannot have another Homeric poem is like weeping for the feeble days of childhood; and shows an insensibility to the ever-increasing beauty and grandeur developed by the Spirit in its endless progress; a forgetfulness of those powers of soul, which result from this very progress; which enable it, while enjoying the present, to add to that joy by the remembrance of the past, and to grasp at a higher from the anticipations of the future. By the progress of the arts power is manifested by an agency almost as invisible as itself--it almost speaks, and it is done; it almost commands, and it stands fast. Man needs no longer a vast array of physical means to effect his loftiest purpose--he seizes the quill, the mere toy of a child, and stamps on the glowing page the copy of his own mind, his thoughts pregnant with celestial fire; and sends them forth, wherever the winds of heaven blow or its light penetrates, the winged messengers of his pleasure. He is learning to reverse the order, in which the ancients looked at the outward creation; he looks at the world with reference to himself, and not at himself with reference to the world. How different the view which Virgil takes of his country from that of the Christian poet--yet each how worthy of its author!

"Hic ver assiduum, atque alienis mensibus æstas;
Bis gravidæ pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbor.
Adde tot egregias urbes, operumque laborem,
Tot congesta manu præruptis oppida saxis
Fluminaque antiquos subterlabentia muros." &c.

"O my mother isle!
Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
A husband, and a father! who revere
All bonds of natural love, and find them all
Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
O native Brita[i]n! O my mother isle!

How shoulds[t] thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks, and seas
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely, and all honourable things,
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?"

We cannot sympathize with that spirit of criticism, which censures modern Poetry for being the portra[i]ture of individual characteristics and passions; and not the reflection of the general features of society, and the outward man. If we want such poetry as Homer's, we must not only evoke him from the shades, but also his times. Purely objective poetry is the most perfect, and possesses the most interest only in the childhood of the human mind. In the poetry of the Hindoos, the Israelites, as well as the Greeks, the epic is the prevailing element. But that page of the heroic character is turned forever--another element is developing itself in the soul; and breathing into the materiality of the past a spiritual life and beauty. It is in vain we echo the words of other days and call it poetry--it is in vain we collect the scattered dust of the past, and attempt to give it form and life by that same principle, which once animated it; we can only give a brighter and more joyous existence to the cold forms of departed days by bowing down, like the prophet of old, and breathing into them a purer and more ennobling faith, the brighter flame of our own bosoms. To stir the secret depths of <u>our</u> hearts writers must have penetrated deeply into their own. Homer found conflicts <u>without</u> to describe; shall the poets of our day be blamed because they would exhibit to us those they feel <u>within</u>? Milton gives us the philosophy of Christian epic poets, when he says, "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing of high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy." What indeed are the writings of the great poets of our own times but epics; the description of those internal conflicts, the interest in which has so far superseded those of the outward world? A sufficient answer to the charge of egotism and selfishness, to which they are exposed, is given in the words of Coleridge. "In the Paradise Lost--indeed in every one of his poems--it is Milton himself whom you see; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve--are all John Milton, and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives me the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit."

La Martine when he complains so often, at not being able to give to the world an epic embodying the present developement of the heroic character, seems not to have dreamt that, unless he could represent objectively the action of one mind on another, he was, by the the expression of his feelings, giving us the only epic poem the mind, in its present stage, is capable of giving.

The principles we have laid down will show why Coleridge was right in saying, that "the destruction of Jerusalem was the only subject now remaining for an epic poem; a subject, which like Milton's Fall of Man, should interest all christendom, as the Homeric war of Troy interested all Greece." He farther observes, that "the subject, with all its great capabilities, has this one grand defect, that, whereas a poem to be epic must have a <u>personal</u> interest, in the destruction of Jerusalem no genius or skill could possibly preserve the interest for the hero from being merged in the interest for the event." We will not touch upon other objections, which he himself has urged--such as Mythology and Manners--to which what we have already said on other poems will as well apply; but will only remark that the subject itself is incapable of exhibiting the present development of the heroic character; and cannot, therefore, be made the <u>great</u> epic of this age, or any to come. This may be seen from what has been already said---what made Milton's subject <u>great</u>, and what can <u>now</u> alone make any subject for epic interest <u>great</u>, was the action made <u>visible</u> of a superior intellect on an inferior. The reason is evident--it is this manner of representing power, which alone possesses a corresponding interest with tragedy; by which alone there can be a <u>hero</u> capable of sustaining the interest. The poem of Coleridge, even if feasible, must have been more similar to Tasso's than Milton's; and, consequently, when compared with the latter, not <u>great</u>.

Schiller's plan of an epic poem, founded on Frederick the Great of Prussia as the hero, must, if the principles we have laid down are correct, have proved far more futile than the one last mentioned--and it strongly confirms, as we think, the remarks before made on the hostility of the dramatic to the epic interest, that two of the greatest poets of our age should each have schemed an epic poem, yet neither completed one.

Of such attempts at the epic as Monte's in Italian and Pollok's in our own language, we will only say that they are as much wanting in the spirit of an epic, as in its true form; and that they are as remote from the merit of Dante, whom they have taken as their model, as near him in plan. Their poems resemble those Spanish epics, which suddenly appeared in the reign of Philip II; the whole series of which were nothing but chronicles, and differed but little from histories. Of Wilkie and a host of others we might say as Giraldi Cintio said of Trissino, who employed twenty years on his "Italia Liberata," that they do but select the refuse from the gold of Homer, imitate his vices, and gather together all that which good judges would wish to be rid of by which they show little wisdom.

We have thus endeavoured to show the inability of the human mind, at the present day, to represent objectively its own action on another mind; and that the power to do this could alone enable the poet to em-

body in his hero the present developement of the heroic character, and give to his poem a universal interest. We rejoice at this inability--it is the high privilege of our age--the greatest proof of the progress of the soul--and of its approach to that state of being where its thought is action, its word power.

Epictetus. Senior.

[Very reworked his dissertation for publication in The Christian Examiner, XXIV, 201-221 (May, 1838), concerning which Perry Miller makes some observations in The Transcendentalists: An Anthology, Cambridge, 1950, 343. He was apparently unaware of the Bowdoin Prize Dissertations and the rich speculation on the epic which we have cited in the foregoing pages.]

ART. IV.——Influence of Christianity and of the Progress of Civilization on Epic Poetry.

The poets of the present day who would raise the epic song cry out, like Archimedes of old, "give us a place to stand on and we will move the world." This is, as we conceive, the true difficulty. Glancing for a moment at the progress of epic poetry, we shall see that the obscurity of fabulous times could be adapted to the earliest development only of the heroic char-

acter. There is an obvious incongruity in making times so far remote the theatre on which to represent the heroism of a civilized age; and it adds still more to the difficulty, that, although the darkness of fable still invests them, reason will no longer perceive the beings which the infant credulity of man once saw there.

To men in the early stages of society their physical existence must seem almost without end, and they live on through life with as little reference to another state of being as we ourselves do in childhood. To minds in this state there was a remoteness in an event which had taken place one or two centuries before, of which we cannot conceive, and which rendered the time that Homer had chosen for his subject, though not materially differing in character, sufficiently remote for his purpose. If to these advantages possessed by Homer we add those which belonged to him from the religion of his times and from tradition; whose voice is to the poet more friendly than the plain written records of history, we must confess that the spot on which he built up his scenes of heroic wonder was peculiarly favorable. The advance, which the human mind had made towards civilization, prevented Virgil from making a like impression on his own age. To awaken admiration, he too was obliged to break from the bonds of the present, and soar beyond the bounds of history, before he could throw his spell of power over the mind. Why had he less influence? Because he could not, like Homer, carry into the past the spirit of his times. To the enlarged minds of Virgil's day the interval between the siege of Troy and their own time did not seem wider than it did to those who lived in the time of Homer. The true distance in time was chosen by each, but the character of Æneas did not possess those great attributes which could render it the Achilles of the Romans. Lucan, while his characters exhibit the true heroic spirit of his age, fails of giving to them their due influence from the want of some region of fiction beyond the dominion of history in which to place them, he cannot break from the present without violating every law of probability. To escape this thraldom and reach a point from which the heroic character of their age might be seen dilated to its full height, modern poets have fled beyond the bounds of time and woke the echoes of eternity. It was only from this point that the Christian world could be moved; it is only in that region without bounds, that the heroism of immortality can be shown in visible action. Milton and Dante chose

this spot, on which with almost creative power they might show to mankind worlds of their own, "won from the void and formless Infinite," and from which their own heroic spirits might be reflected back upon their own times in all their gigantic proportions. But such has been the progress of the human mind since their time, that it would seem to have reached already another stage in its development, to have unfolded a new form of the heroic character, one which finds no paradise, nay, no heaven, for itself in the creations of Milton, and for which the frowns of Dante's hell have no terror. This new page of the heroic character naturally leads us to inquire, whether we are to have no great representation of it, no embodying of this spirit in some gigantic form of action, which shall stalk before the age, and by the contemplation of which our minds may be fired to nobler deeds.

In considering this question, we shall endeavor to show what reasons there are for not expecting another great epic poem, drawn from the principles of epic poetry and the human mind, and that these present an insuperable barrier to the choice of a subject, which shall exhibit the present development of the heroic character in action.

In doing this I shall exhibit, by an analysis of the Iliad,—the true model of an Epic poem,—its origin and peculiarities, and in what manner those peculiarities have been changed, and, at last, lost by succeeding poets, according to the development of the heroic character in their several eras.

I shall thus be led to show that the taking away of the peculiarities of *epic* interest, and the final merging of that interest in the *dramatic*, is the natural result of the influences to which the human mind in its progress is subjected; and that that influence, while it precludes all former subjects from representing the present development of the heroic character, throws, at the same time, an insuperable barrier in the way of any subject.

Looking upon Homer, at least as regards the Iliad, as a single man speaking throughout with one accent of voice, one form of language, and one expression of feeling, we leave to the framers of modern paradoxes the question, whether this name is a type or not, and proceed to consider what might be the probable origin of the Iliad, and what it is which constitutes it the true model of an epic poem, a more perfect visible manifestation of the heroic character than can be again presented to the eyes of man. In a philosophical analysis of such a poem

as the Iliad or Odyssey, made with reference to its epic peculiarities, there is great danger of misconceiving the history and character of early heroic poetry, thus giving to the poet a plan which he never formed, or a moral which he never conceived. The simplest conception of the origin and plan of the Iliad must, we think, prove the most correct. It originated, doubtless, in that desire, which every great poet must especially feel, of revealing to his age forms of nobler beauty and heroism than dwell in the minds of those around him. Wandering, as his active imagination must have led him to do, in the days of the past, Homer must have been led by the fitness of the materials presented to him in the siege of Troy, by their remoteness from his own time, and the interest with which they would be viewed by the mass of his countrymen, as descendants of the Grecian heroes, to the choice of a subject, which seemed to present a worthy form in which to manifest the workings of his soul. His enthusiasm would doubtless prompt him to the execution of detached parts before he had completed his general plan, and the various incidents, which constitute so much of the charm and interest of his poem as they suggested themselves to his mind, would also direct him to the great point round which they all revolved. The influence upon the several parts, resulting from the contemplation of the chief character, would thus give all the unity to the subject which we find in fact to belong to the earliest forms of a nation's poetry. "Passion to excite sympathy, variety to prevent disgust flowing in a free stream of narrative verse, not the intricacy and dove-tailing of modern epics, is to be looked for in the Iliad; for it was not made like a modern epic to be read in our closets, but to be presented only in fragments before the minds of an audience. Thus the single combats of Menelaus and Paris, the funeral games of Patroclus, and the restitution and burial of the body of Hector are generally complete in themselves, yet having an obvious connexion as still telling the same great tale of Troy." So much for the origin and fable of the Iliad.

The genius displayed in its grand and comprehensive design is only equalled by the judgment manifested in confining the action to the busiest and most interesting period of the Trojan war, in thus uniting in his plan and bringing forward in his details everything which could lay hold of the affections, the prejudices, and vanity of his countrymen. Of his characters we need only say that, like those of Shakspeare, they are stamped with nature's own image and superscription. Though all are possessed of valor and courage, yet they are so distinguished from one another by certain peculiarities of disposition and manners, that to distinguish them it is hardly necessary to hear their names. Achilles is brave, and Hector is brave, so are Ajax, Menelaus, and Diomede; but the bravery of Hector is not of the same kind with that of Ajax, and no one will mistake the battle-shout of the son of Atreus for the war-cry of Tydides.

Homer's machinery, as all epic machinery must be, was founded on the popular belief in the visible appearance of the gods; and on account of this belief he was not less favored by the circumstances under which he introduced them, than he was by those which enabled him to represent his heroes. It cast around his whole subject a sublimity which it could not otherwise have had, giving occasion to noble description, and tending to excite that admiration which is the leading aim of the epic.

We have made this analysis of the Iliad, to show in what way all things combined in Homer's age to assist him in giving a perfect outward manifestation of the heroic character of his times. He wrote in that stage of society when man's physical existence assumed an importance in the mind, like that of our immortality, and gave to all without a power and dignity not their own. This it was which imparted an heroic greatness to war which cannot now be seen in it. That far-reaching idea of time, which seems to expand our thoughts with limitless existence, gives to our mental struggles a greatness they could not have before had. We each of us feel within our own bosoms a great, an immortal foe, which, if we have subdued, we may meet with calmness every other, knowing that earth contains no greater; but which, if we have not, it will continually appear in those petty contests with others by which we do but show our own cowardice. The Greeks, on the contrary, lived only for their country, and drew everything within the sphere of their national views; their highest exemplification of morality was patriotism. Of Homer's heroes it may with peculiar propriety be said that they were but children of a larger growth, and they could have no conception of power that was not perceived in its visible effects. "The world," as Milton says of our first parents, "was all *before* them," and not *within* them, and their mission was to go forth and make a material impression on the material world. The soul of Homer was the mirror of this outward world, and in his verse we have it shown to us with the distinctness and reality of the painter's page. Lucan calls him the prince of painters, and with him Cicero agrees, when he says, "Quæ species ac forma pugnæ, quæ acies, quod remigium, qui motus hominum, qui ferarum non ita expictus est, ut quæ ipse non viderit, nos ut videremus effecerit?" It is needless perhaps to say that this state of the mind gives both a reason and excuse for those many epithets, which a false criticism and a false delicacy of taste is so fond of censuring. Such critics would blame the poet for praising the physical strength of his heroes, in short for representing his gods such as they were believed to be, and painting his warriors such as they were. When we look back upon the pages of their history, we cannot contemplate the greatness there exhibited, without a feeling of sorrow that they had not lived under influences as favorable as our own, without a sense of unworthiness at not having exhibited characters corresponding with the high privileges we enjoy. We respect that grandeur of mind in the heroes of Homer which led them to sacrifice a mere earthly existence for the praise of all coming ages. They have not been disappointed. Worlds to them unknown have read of their deeds, and generations yet unborn shall honor them. They live on a page which the finger of time strives in vain to efface, which shall ever remain an eternal monument of disgrace to those of after times, who, though gifted with higher views of excellence, have yet striven to erect a character on deeds like theirs. We reverence not in Hector and Achilles the mere display of physical power, we reverence not the manners of their times which but too often call forth our horror and disgust; but we do reverence and honor those motives which even in the infancy of the human mind served to raise it above the dominion of sense, and taught it to grasp at a life beyond the narrow limits of its earthly vision.

This state of things gave to the Iliad and Odyssey that intense epic interest, which we fail to find in later heroic poems. As the mind advances, a stronger sympathy with the inner man of the heart is more and more felt, and becomes more and more the characteristic of literature. In the expanded mind and cultivated affections, a new interest is awakened, *dramatic* poetry succeeds the *epic*, thus satisfying the want produced by the farther development of our nature. For the interest of the *epic* consists in that character of greatness that in the infancy of the mind is given to physical action and the objects associated with it; but the interest of the *drama* consists in those mental struggles which precede physical action, and to which in the

progress of man the greatness of the other becomes subordinate. For as the mind expands and the moral power is developed, the mightiest conflicts are born within, — outward actions lose their grandeur, except to the eye, for the soul looks upon them but as results of former battles won and lost, upon whose decision, and upon whose alone, its destiny hung. This is the mystery of that calm, more awful than the roar of battle, which rests on the spirits of the mighty, and which the hand of the Grecian sculptor strove to fix on the brow of his god. Though Homer has given variety to his poem by the introduction of dialogue, and thus rendered it, in one sense, often dramatic; yet we find it is the mere transferring of the *narrative* from his own lips to those of others. The interest is still *without*, it is not the interest of sentiment, but of description. This character of the Greeks, as might be supposed, is shown in their language; and illustrates their tendency in early times to look upon themselves in all reflex acts, whether external or internal, as patients rather than agents; a tendency, to use the words of another, which is exemplified in every page of the Homeric poems, and which belongs more or less to every people in an early stage of civilization, before the nation comes of age, and acquires the consciousness along with the free use of its powers. This seems to be the reason why so many of the verbs, employed by the Greeks to denote states of mind or of feeling, have a passive form, such as *Φρύζομαι, Οἴομαι, Αἰσθάνομαι, Σκέπτομαι, Ἐπίσταμαι, Βούλομαι*, &c. "Men's minds," as Shakspeare has somewhere said, "are parcel of their fortunes," and his age was necessary and alone suited to the mind of Homer. Man viewed himself with reference to the world; not, as in the present day, the world in reference to himself, and it was this state of the mind which then made the taking of Troy the point of epic interest.

We have thus endeavored to show that the manifestation of the heroic character in the time of Homer was perfectly exhibited in outward visible action, and that this reflected from the soul of the poet addressed to a seeing and listening, rather than a reading people, was the poetry of fancy rather than sentiment. Events, characters, superstitions, customs, and traditions, all combined in rendering the Iliad a perfect embodying of the perfect outward manifestation of the heroic character of that period. The poetry of the senses, the reflection merely of nature and of heroic achievements, is not susceptible of indefinite progress; it must evidently be most perfect when the objects of visible action are noblest, and we view all else only with reference to those actions. The epic poetry of the Greeks corresponds to sculpture, and in the one, as in the other, the outward forms of life and action live and will ever live unrivalled.

It is not our purpose to show the adaptation of the rules of Aristotle to the Iliad, since from this those rules were drawn, — we would only say that according to the spirit of those rules every true epic must be formed. They are not the arbitrary decisions of a critic, but the voice of nature herself speaking through her interpreter. Aristotle studied nature in Homer; he gave no arbitrary rules, he did but trace the pleasing effects produced on the mind, and taught upon what those effects depended. He may have erred in drawing his rules from one development of the heroic character; but this was the fault of his times not of his judgment. He did not mean that succeeding poets should bow to him, but should reverence those great principles to which he had shown that nature herself had conformed in her noblest work. The true poet will look without for no rules drawn from others; he feels within himself the living standard of the great and beautiful, and bows to that alone: as far as it has become changed by human error or imperfection, he would gladly restore it to its original purity, by a conformity to those universal laws of sublimity and beauty, which the critic has shown to be followed by nature herself.

When Aristotle tells us that the action of an epic should be one and entire, and that it should be a great action, he tells us of what constitutes its essence, and of that without which it ceases to be such a poem. It must be one and entire that the interest may not be distracted, and that the mind may feel the harmony of all its proportions. It is not the poet of fancy who can bind by his spell the parts of such a fabric, it is the poet who has felt more strongly than any other the great moral wants of his age, that can give to such a work its unity and power. It has been well said that in reading the gay creations of Ariosto, — of his fairy bowers and castles and palaces, — we are for a moment charmed and wrapt in pleasant reveries, but they are but dreams; the impression is soon shaken off; we are conscious of no master-feeling round which they gather, and which alone could render his poem an epic, the noblest of harmonious creations. But in reading the Iliad or a tragedy like Lear or Macbeth, or in looking sometime at a painting on which the moral sentiment of the artist is as strongly impressed as his imagination, instead of being obliged to humor the fancy that the charm may be kept alive, we shall with difficulty shake off the impression, when it is necessary to return to the real business of life. It is in the greatness of the epic action that the poets succeeding Homer, if we except Milton, have failed; and the causes, which have operated against them, will always operate with increasing force against every attempt to represent the present or future development of the heroic character in action. It is in the childhood of the human mind alone, that the interval between thought and action is the widest, and therefore it is then alone that the events occupying that interval can be best described. The great struggle of the epic poets since the time of Homer has been against this narrowing of their field of action, and making the instruments there employed less visible, less tangible. The wonder and interest of the world is now transferred to the mind, whose thought is action, and whose word is power. Lord Kames therefore erred, when he said "that it was the *familiarity* of modern manners that unqualified them for epic poetry, and that the dignity of present manners would be better understood in future ages, when they are no longer familiar." The fact is, our manners, or the manners and actions of any intellectual nation, can never become the representatives of greatness, — they have fallen from the high sphere which they occupied in a less advanced stage of the human mind, never to regain it. This will account for the appearance among us of such works as the "Sartor Resartus," whose object is to impress the forms of physical life with a greatness no longer belonging to them, and which we recognise only in spiritual action.

These remarks will show why it was that Virgil failed in making the same impression on his age, that was made by his great model. His poem is but a lunar reflection of the Iliad; and it was perhaps from a deep consciousness of this, that he ordered it in his will to be burned. That poem, which was the natural expression of the early features of society, could only be faintly copied by the mimic hand of art. Virgil's subject is well chosen, and would not have shone with reflected light had it been treated of in the early days of Rome. He summoned again from their long sleep the heroes and gods of Troy, but they appeared with dimmed glory amid the brightness of another age. He had, as we have before observed, chosen the right point in time for his action, a time of tradition, affording him all the advantages possessed by Homer, but not to transgress the laws of probability, he could not give his hero the character of another age, he could not make Æneas the Achilles

of the Romans. Virgil as well as Lucan has been blamed by the critics; the one, for not giving to his hero the dignity of thought becoming the heroic character of his own time; the other, for not placing his action beyond the strict bounds of history. In regard to each we think the critics have erred; for neither the time nor the characters could have been changed without producing a strange incongruity.

Thus the epic poets of Greece and Rome, who succeeded Homer, must have labored under peculiar disadvantages to which those of modern times are not subjected. If, like Virgil, they had chosen the same time for their action with Homer, they could not transfer to it the heroic spirit of their own day, at least, in its noblest development, — they could not make a Cato or a Brutus cotemporary with an Achilles or an Ajax; — they must evoke the heroic spirits of other days, spirits reluctant to obey the spells employed by the magicians of another age. Virgil, as well as every other poet whose action lies in times very far distant from his own, has not the greatest difficulty to overcome, in exhibiting characters moved by those same affections and sympathies which unite the ceaseless generations of men, in giving to the slumbering past the emotions of the present; but in *adapting* to the story of a *former* age, and perhaps foreign nation, that peculiar system of manners which constitutes the outward development of the heroic spirit, and of which no mind, but such as has been subjected to its actual influence, can either strongly feel or vividly describe. These manners perish with their age, — there is no hand of enchantment to wave over them and convert them, like the fabled city of Arabian romance, into living stone; no convulsion of nature, like that which covered Pompeii, to wrap them in a veil which future ages might withdraw, and permit them, untouched by the hand of time, to stand unimpaired amid the ruins of the past and gaze with wonder on the new-risen generations of men. But if, like Lucan, they took their subject from the hands of History, the skepticism of a more advanced age deprived them of the use of machinery, and consequently of the power of exciting that admiration, which is the leading aim of the epic poem. We need not stop to show how ridiculous Iris would have appeared on the plains of Pharsalia bringing a sword to Pompey, or Venus coming to snatch him away in a cloud. It is evident that the poet, forced to follow in the same path with the historian, must feel the bonds of reality continually restraining and checking his native energies.

These difficulties the influence of Christianity overcame, but subjected the epic poet to others still more discouraging, as I shall endeavor to show by a brief reference to Tasso, Dante, and Milton.

The subject chosen by Tasso, and the time of the action of his poem, bore the same relation to Christian civilization as Homer's did to Grecian. It was the only age in which the heroic Christian character could be fully manifested in outward action. This resulted from a peculiar state of the mind which, as we have said in regard to heroic manners, perishes with its age, with the circumstances that call it forth. It was a new development of the Homeric spirit, modified by Christianity. The interest as in the Iliad and Æneid is all *without*, and this it is which gives to the poem of Tasso, as to the other two, the true epic interest, and adds a dignity to the manners of these poems belonging to no other, where the subject is taken from the common events of life. The subject, too, as it presented a scene for the display of action resulting from a purer faith, possesses a dignity far surpassing that of his two great predecessors. Thus fortunate in his subject and the time of his action, he was equally favored by the popular belief of his age. By the superstition of his own time he was enabled to oppose with success the light of reality which was thrown around his subject by history, and give to it that supernatural interest, which is found so capable of exciting admiration. However, in our cooler moments, we may laugh at his magicians and their incantations, as they are not mere embodied abstractions, like Voltaire's agents, but founded on the actual belief of his day, they will always possess a reality to the mind; and, when in reading we have yielded for a time to our feelings, will again assert their power. We have placed Tasso before Dante, in order of time, because he has given an earlier development of the heroic character. He would, doubtless, have possessed as well as Virgil, whom he has so closely followed, greater originality, and more strongly exhibited that development, had he lived nearer the age he endeavored to portray.

The effect of Christianity was to make the individual mind the great object of regard, the centre of eternal interest, and transferring the scene of action from the outward world to the world within, to give to all modern literature the dramatic tendency, — and as the mind of Homer led him to sing of the physical conflicts of his heroes with *visible* gods *without*; so the soul of the modern poet, feeling itself contending with motives of god-like power *within*, must express that conflict in the dramatic form, in the poetry of sentiment. Were the present a fit opportunity, Shakspeare might afford us still farther illustrations of this truth, and especially in the character of Hamlet, of whom a critic has truly said, "we love him not, we think of him not, because he is witty, because he was melancholy, because he was filial; but we love him because he existed, and was himself. This is the sum total of the impression. I believe that of every other character, either in tragic or epic poetry, the story makes part of the conception; but of Hamlet the deep and permanent interest is the conception of himself. This seems to belong not to the character being more perfectly drawn, but to there being a more intense conception of individual human life, than perhaps in any other human composition." The Sartor Resartus, Lamartine's Pilgrimage, Wordsworth's poem on the growth of an individual mind, all obey the same law, — which is, that as Christianity influences us, we shall lay open to the world what has been long hidden, what has before been done in the secret corners of our own bosoms; the knowledge of which can alone make our intercourse with those about us different from what it is too fast becoming, an intercourse of the eye and the ear and the hand and the tongue. This may serve to reveal to us more clearly the principle which led to the selection of the subjects of all the great epic poems of modern times; for it was only by making man the subject, around which might be gathered the material forms of grandeur and beauty, that an interest could be imparted to the epic corresponding to that of the drama. The poem of Tasso forms the only exception to this remark, and this, as we have shown, does but confirm our observation; for it represents the mind essentially pagan, yet moved by Christianity, and finding like the Greek all its motive for action without. Our interest in the poem is consequently much less than in those which exhibit the later developments of the Christian heroic character.

By removing the bounds of time, Christianity has, I think, rendered every finite subject unsuited for an epic poem. The Christian creed, in opening the vista of eternity before the poet's view, and leaving him unrestrained by prescriptive forms, while it freed him from the bonds of history, by giving him a place beyond its limits where he might transfer the heroic spirit of his age, and surround his heroes with supernatural agents, capable of raising for his action the highest admiration, subjected him to a far greater difficulty than any yet experienced by former poets; that of finding a subject, an action to fill those boundless

realms of space, and call forth the energies of the spirits that people it. In considering the efforts which Christian poets have made to overcome this difficulty and bridge the space between time and eternity, we shall find the great reason for not expecting another attempt, so successful as that made by Milton, arising from circumstances which have rendered the difficulty far more formidable since his time.

If we consider Tasso as having chosen a subject exhibiting the first development of the Christian heroic character, the poem of Dante will exhibit to us the second. Though not an epic, if viewed with reference to classical models whose aim and spirit were intrinsically different from any produced since, it will serve to show how the genius of Dante overcame the difficulty we have mentioned. His poem is unique, but produced under circumstances which would have rendered it, if the obstacles we have alluded to had not opposed, a regular epic poem. It had its origin like other sublime works of genius, in that desire, which is continually felt by the greatest minds, of giving to their age a copy of their own souls, and embodied the vague but universal spirit of the times when it was written. His foundations were the popular creed of all Christendom, its supports the deep reasonings and curious subtilties of countless theologians, and the scenes it represents, such as had long formed the dreams of many a monk on Vallombrosa, and perhaps entered into the sermon of every preacher in Europe.

Thus, although the circumstances which gave birth to Dante's poem, were, if we may so say, epic, yet the form, which that poem took, shows the hostility which the Christian influence has towards the strictly classical model. That influence had already divested of its greatness every subject like that of Homer's or Virgil's, and turned upon himself, as an individual, the interest which man in their times had given to the outward world. It is in Dante's poem that we find man, as a physical being, first made the great point of epic interest. He is the first epic poet that exhibits the tendency we have so often alluded to. Favored beyond succeeding poets by the belief of his age, he was enabled to gather around man beings which his ignorance and fear shrouded in a sublimity not their own. That strange world of beings, which the spirit creates for itself, have fled before the light of science, their forms no longer float in the fairy halls of earth, nor throng the untravelled regions of space. Their foot-prints, which our infant eyes saw impressed on this strange world of ours, and which once conjured up so many and wondrous shapes of beauty or terror, tell us now but of one creative spirit in whom we recognise our Father.

> "The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
> The fair humanities of old religion,
> The powers, the beauty, and the majesty
> That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
> Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
> Or chasms or watery depths, — all these have vanished;
> They live no longer in the faith of reason."

In Dante's time, Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven had long been considered as the separate states in which vice and virtue would meet their fitting reward. This belief had been taught by signs and emblems; and those of his day had been made to learn rather through the medium of their senses, than the silent arguments of conscience "accusing or excusing itself," what were the rewards and punishments of the future world. This material development of Christianity it was Dante's mission to hold up to his age, and upon that age it must have had and did have its greatest influence; for it was produced by the power of materiality which is lessened with every advance of the Christian character. His poem plainly shows that the tendency which Christianity gave to poetry was not to the epic but to the dramatic form, and if it freed the heroic poet from difficulties to which he was before liable, it also exposed him to another, which, although evaded by Milton, must in the end prove fatal.

The next and highest development of the heroic character, yet shown in action, was that exhibited by the sublime genius of Milton. The mind had taken a flight above the materiality of Dante, and resting between that and the pure spirituality of the present day, afforded him a foundation for his action. He could not adopt altogether the material or the immaterial system, and he therefore raised his structure on the then debatable ground. The greatest objection, which our minds urge against his agents, is the incongruity between their spiritual properties and the human modes of existence, he was obliged to ascribe to them. But this is an objection of our own times, of men requiring a more spiritual representation of the mind's action, which, if it cannot be given, must preclude the possibility of another great epic. In fact, Milton's poem but confirms more strongly the conclusion we drew from Dante's, that *dramatic* is supplying the place of epic interest. His long deliberation in the choice of a subject, suited to his conceptions, shows the *difficulty then* lying in the way of an epic, and his first intention of making Paradise Lost a *tragedy*, shows *whence* this difficulty originated. The tendency of the mind, to which we have before alluded, and which had grown yet stronger in Milton's time than before, compelled him to make choice of the *Fall of Man* as his subject; a subject exclusive in its nature, being the only one which to our minds possesses a great epic interest. The interest of his poem depends upon the strong feeling we have of our own free agency, and of the almost infinite power it is capable of exercising. An intense feeling of this kind seems to have pervaded Milton's whole life, and by this he was probably directed in the choice of his theme. We find in his "Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing," written many years before the conception of his poem, a sentence confirming this supposition. "Many," says he, "there be that complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose; for reason is but choosing. He had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience or love or gift which is of force." This feeling becomes stronger the more the mind is influenced by Christianity, and this it is which has transferred the interest from the outward manifestation of the passions exhibited in the Iliad, to those inward struggles made by a power greater than they to control them, and cause them, instead of bursting forth like lava-torrents to devour and blast the face of nature, to flow on like meadow-streams of life and joy. Why then it may be asked do we take an interest in Homer's heroes, whom the gods are ready every moment to shield or snatch from the dubious fight? Not, I answer, because we consider them mere machines acting but from others' impulses, for *then* we could take no interest in them; but because when

> "Arms on armor clashing bray
> Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
> Of brazen chariots rage,"

we give to them our own freedom; or because the gods themselves, whom Homer has called down to swell the fight, and embodied in his heroes; because *these* create the interest and make what were before mere puppets free agents. When in our cooler moments we reflect on his Jove-protected warriors, his invulnerable Achilles, they dwindle into insignificance, and we are ready to exclaim in the quaint language of another,

"Bully Dawson would have fought the devil with such advantages."

This sense of free agency is what constitutes Adam the hero of Paradise Lost, and makes him capable of sustaining the immense weight of interest, which in this poem is made to rest upon him. But that which renders Adam the hero of the poem makes Satan still more so; for Milton has opened to our gaze, within his breast of flame, passions of almost infinite growth, burning with intensest rage. *There* is seen a conflict of "those thoughts that wander through eternity," at the sight of which we lose all sense of the material terrors of that fiery hell around him, and compared with which the physical conflict of the archangels is a mockery. It is not so much that battles present less a subject for description than they did in the time of Homer, that they fail to awaken those feelings of admiration they then did, but because we have become sensible of a power within which bids the tide of war roll back upon its fountains. For the same reason it is that the *manners* of civilized nations are unsuited for heroic song. They are no longer the representatives of greatness; for the heroism of Christianity is not seen so much in the outward act, as in the struggle of the will to control the springs of action. It is this which gives to tragedy its superiority over the epic at the present day; it strikes off the chains of wonder by which man has been so long fettered to the objects of sense, and, instead of calling upon him to admire the torrent-streams of war, it bids the bosom open whence they rushed, and points him downward to their source, the ocean might of the soul,

> "Dark — heaving — boundless, endless, and sublime —
> The image of eternity — the throne
> Of the Invisible."

Thus Milton's poem is the most favorable model we can have of a Christian epic — the subject of it afforded him the only field of great epic interest, where the greatest power could be shown engaged in bringing about the greatest results. Adam is not so much the Achilles as the Troy of the poem. And there is no better proof that greatness has left the material throne, which she has so long held, for a spiritual one, than that Milton, in putting in motion that vast machinery which he did to effect his purpose, seems as if he made, like Ptolemy, the sun and all the innumerable hosts of heaven again to revolve about this little spot of earth. Though he has not made the Fall of Man a tragedy in *form*, as he first designed, he has yet made it tragic in *spirit*; and the epic form it has taken seems but the drapery of another interest. This proves that, however favored by his subject the epic poet of our day may be, he must by the laws of his own being possess an introspective mind, and give that which Bacon calls an inwardness of meaning to his characters, which, in proportion as the mind advances, must diminish that greatness once shown in visible action. The Christian Knights might well exclaim, when they first saw gunpowder used in war, as Plutarch tells us the king of Sparta did, when he saw a machine for the casting of stones and darts, that it was "the grave of valor." They were the graves of that personal valor which is shown in its perfection in the infancy of the mind, and which is imaged in the pages of Homer. In modern battles, the individuality of early times is lost and merged in one great head, with reference to which we view all results. The men upon whom the superior mind acts are mere mechanical instruments of its power, and the deeds seen by the outward eye are thus dimmed by the soul's quicker perception of spiritual action. Thus the intellectual power wielded by the commander seems already to have decided the battle, and we look with less interest upon his army's incursions into the territory of an enemy. As Sallust says of Jugurtha, "totum regnum animo jam invaserat."

To complain of this tendency of the human mind and its influence on literature, to sigh that we cannot have another Homeric poem, is like weeping for the feeble days of childhood, and shows an insensibility to the ever-increasing beauty and grandeur developed by the spirit in its endless progress, a forgetfulness of those powers of soul which result from this very progress, which enable it, while enjoying the present, to add to that joy by the remembrance of the past, and to grasp at a higher from the anticipations of the future. With the progress of the arts, power is manifested by an agency almost as invisible as itself; it almost speaks and it is done, it almost commands and it stands fast. Man needs no longer a vast array of physical means to effect his loftiest purpose; he seizes the quill, the mere toy of a child, and stamps on the glowing page the copy of his own mind, his thoughts pregnant with celestial fire, and sends them forth, wherever the winds of heaven blow or its light penetrates, the winged messengers of his pleasure. The narrow walls of patriotism are broken down, and he is a brother on whom the same sun shines, and who holds the same heritage, the earth. He is learning to reverse the order in which the ancients looked at the outward creation, he looks at the world with reference to himself, and not at himself with reference to the world. How different the view which Virgil takes of his country from that of the Christian poet; yet each how worthy of its age!

> "Sed neque Medorum silvæ, ditissima terra,
> Nec pulcher Ganges, atque auro turbidus Hermus,
> Laudibus Italiæ certent; non Bactra, neque Indi,
> Totaque thuriferis Panchaia pinguis arenis.
> Hæc loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem
> Invertêre, satis immanis dentibus hydri;
> Nec galeis densisque virûm seges horruit hastis:
> Sed gravidæ fruges et Bacchi Massicus humor
> Implevêre; tenent oleæ, armentaque læta.
> Hinc bellator equus campo sese arduus infert;
> Hinc albi, Clitumne, greges, et maxima taurus
> Victima, sæpe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,
> Romanos ad templa deûm duxêre triumphos.
> Hic ver assiduum, atque alienis mensibus æstas;
> Bis gravidæ pecudes, bis pomis utilis arbor."

> "O my mother isle!
> Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
> To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
> A husband, and a father! who revere
> All bonds of natural love, and find them all
> Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
> O native Britain! O my mother isle!
> How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
> To me, who from thy lakes, and mountain-hills,
> Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks, and seas
> Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
> All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
> All adoration of the God in nature,
> All lovely and all honorable things,
> Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
> The joy and greatness of its future being?"

We cannot sympathize with that spirit of criticism, which censures modern poetry for being the portraiture of individual characteristics and passions, and not the reflection of the general features of society and the outward man. If we want such poetry as Homer's, we must not only evoke him from the shades, but also his times. Purely objective poetry is the most perfect, and possesses the most interest only in the childhood of the human mind. In the poetry of the Hindoos, the Israelites, as well as the Greeks, the epic is the prevailing element. But

that page of the heroic character is turned forever — another element is developing itself in the soul, and breathing into the materiality of the past a spiritual life and beauty. It is in vain we echo the words of other days and call it poetry; it is in vain we collect the scattered dust of the past, and attempt to give it form and life by that same principle which once animated it. We can only give a brighter and more joyous existence to the cold forms of departed days by bowing down, like the prophet of old, and breathing into them a purer and more ennobling faith, the brighter flame of our own bosoms. To stir the secret depths of *our* hearts, writers must have penetrated deeply into their own. Homer found conflicts *without* to describe; shall the poets of our day be blamed because they would exhibit to us those they feel *within?* Milton gives us the philosophy of Christian epic poets, when he says, "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing of high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy." What, indeed, are the writings of the great poets of our own times but epics; the description of those internal conflicts, the interest in which has so far superseded those of the outward world? A sufficient answer to the charge of egotism and selfishness, to which they are exposed, is given in the words of Coleridge. "In the Paradise Lost, indeed in every one of his poems, it is Milton himself whom you see; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve, are all John Milton; and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives me the greatest pleasure in reading Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit." Lamartine, when he complains so often at not being able to give to the world an epic embodying the present development of the heroic character, seems not to have dreamt that, unless he could represent objectively the action of one mind on another, he was by the expression of his feelings giving us the only epic poem the mind in its present stage is capable of giving.

The truth of the principles, that we have laid down, may be still farther tested by their application to the projected epic of Coleridge on the destruction of Jerusalem, of which he said that it "was the only subject *now* remaining for an epic poem, a subject which, like Milton's Fall of Man, should interest all Christendom, as the Homeric war of Troy interested all Greece." He farther observes, that "the subject with all its great capabilities has this one grand defect, that whereas a poem to be epic must have a *personal* interest in the destruction of Jerusalem, no genius or skill could possibly preserve the interest for the hero from being merged in the interest for the event." We will not touch upon other objections which he himself has urged, such as mythology and manners, to which what we have already said on other poems, will as well apply; but will only remark, that the subject itself is incapable of exhibiting the present development of the heroic character, and cannot therefore be made the great epic of this age, or of any to come. This may be seen from what has been already said; what made Milton's subject great, and what can *now* alone make any subject for epic interest great, was the action made *visible* of a superior intellect on an inferior. Could intellectual power be represented with the same objectiveness as physical power, there might be as many epics now as there are great minds. The reason is obvious. It is this manner of representing power which alone possesses a corresponding interest with tragedy, by which alone there can be a *hero* capable of sustaining the interest. The poem of Coleridge, even if feasible, must have been more similar to Tasso's than Milton's, and consequently when compared with the latter, not great.

Schiller's plan of an epic poem, founded on Frederick the Great of Prussia as the hero, must, if the principles advanced are correct, have proved far more futile than the one last mentioned; and it strongly confirms, as we think, the remarks before made on the hostility of the dramatic to the epic interest, that two of the greatest poets of our age should each have schemed an epic yet neither completed one.

Of such attempts at the epic, as Monte's in Italian and Polk's in our own language, we will only say, that they are as much wanting in the spirit of an epic as in its true form, and that they are as remote from the merit of Dante, whom they have taken as their model, as near him in plan. Their poems resemble those Spanish epics which suddenly appeared in the reign of Philip the Second, the whole series of which were nothing but chronicles, and differed but little from histories. Of Wilkie, and a host of others, we might say as Giraldi Cintio said of Trissino, who employed twenty years on his "Italia Liberata," that they do but select the refuse from the gold of Homer, imitate his vices, and gather together all that which good judges would wish to be rid of, by which they show little wisdom.

We have thus endeavored to show the inability of the human mind, at the present day, to represent objectively its own action on another mind, and that the power to do this could alone enable the poet to embody in his hero the present development of the heroic character, and give to his poem a universal interest. We rejoice at this inability; it is the high privilege of our age, the greatest proof of the progress of the soul, and of its approach to that state of being where its thought is action, its word power.

J. V.

THE OLD MANSE — Parsonage of Rev. William Emerson

EMERSON'S IDEAL CLERGYMAN – HERSEY BRADFORD GOODWIN

By KENNETH WALTER CAMERON

An account of the short life of Hersey Bradford Goodwin is available in the usual reference books.[1] When he entered the Harvard Divinity School in 1826, he became acquainted with Emerson, whose studies there covered parts of the years 1825-1828 and who preceded Goodwin in the active parish ministry by only one year. Both as a seminarian in Cambridge and later as colleague pastor with Ezra Ripley in Concord, Goodwin impressed Emerson as having high qualifications for the profession. He was to provide Emerson with a standard of excellence in 1838, when the "Address Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College" was being composed. (Recent scholarship on that important challenge has much that is less favorable to say for the Reverend Barzillai Frost, Goodwin's successor in Concord.[2]) When, therefore, Goodwin was ordained on February 17, 1830, Emerson was happy to accept a part in the service. In the "Right Hand of Fellowship" which he read on that occasion,[3] he repeated[4] his views on the ministry as he had quite early come to conceive of it. George Moore's account[5] of the ordination, particularly of Emerson's part, is enthusiastic and justifies a reprinting of the short address which has not yet been added to Emerson's collected works. I reproduce in facsimile the original text:

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* For permission to summarize in outline form three of Emerson's unpublished sermons and to quote briefly from two of them, I am indebted to the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association through its president, Edward W. Forbes, Esq., of Harvard University.

1 See Barzillai Frost, "Hersey Bradford Goodwin," Memoirs of the Social Circle in Concord, Second Series, from 1795 to 1840, Cambridge, 1888, pp. 276-285. (Frost composed this sketch in March, 1854.) See also "Hersey Bradford Goodwin" in William B. Sprague, Annals of the American Pulpit, VIII (N.Y., 1865), pp. 548-552.

2 See Conrad Wright, "Emerson, Barzillai Frost, and the Divinity School Address," Harvard Theological Review, XLIX, no. 1 (Jan., 1956), pp. 19-43; Kenneth Walter Cameron, "Emerson, Thoreau, Parson Frost and 'The Problem,'" Emerson Society Quarterly, No. 6 (I Quarter 1957), p. 16; Bliss Perry, Emerson Today, Princeton, 1931, p. 48.

3 See pp. 29-31 of A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Hersey Bradford Goodwin, as Colleague Pastor with Ezra Ripley, D.D., of the Congregational Church and Society in Concord, Mass., Feb. 17, 1830. By James Kendall, D.D., Pastor of the First Church in Plymouth, Concord, 1830.

4 See "The Christian Minister" (Parts I and II) which he preached at the Second Church in Boston on March 15, 1829, now edited in Young Emerson Speaks, ed. A. C. McGiffert, Boston, 1938, pp. 22-38.

5 See Kenneth W. Cameron, The Transcendentalists and Minerva, Hartford, 1958, II, p. 459.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

BY REV. RALPH WALDO EMERSON,

Pastor of the Second Church in Boston.

The ancient custom of offering a new pastor the expression of the sympathy of the churches, is no unsuitable rite in the ceremonies of ordination, and hath a deep foundation in reason. There is no sympathy so strong as that which exists between the good, and this fellow-feeling Christianity has done all to foster.

Whilst men are in the moral darkness which vice produces, each individual is a sect by himself; each is a self-seeker, with his hands against every man, and every man's hands against him. Each, forgetful of all other rights and feelings, is straining every nerve to build up his own sordid advantage, and tearing down his neighbor's happiness, if need be, to build up his own. His eye is blind, his ear is deaf to the great harmonies, by which God has yoked together the social and the selfish good of his children.

Just in proportion as men grow wiser and better, their efforts converge to a point. For, as truth is one, in seeking it, they all aim to conform their actions to one standard. When intelligent men talk together, it is remarkable how much they think alike, how many propositions are taken for granted, that are disputed, word by word, in the conversation of ignorant persons. The more enlightened men are, the greater is this unanimity, as is attested by the common wonder, when two minds of unquestionable elevation, come to opposite conclusions. As it is with the mind, so is it with the heart. As two minds agreeing with truth, do mutually agree, so, if their affections are right with God, they will be true to one another.

Christianity aims to teach the perfection of human nature, and eminently, therefore, does it teach the unity of the spirit. It is not only in its special precepts, but by all its operations, a law of love. It does by its revelation of God, and of the true purposes and the true rules of life, operate to bind up, to join together, and not to distinguish and separate. It proclaimed peace. But it speaks first to its own disciples, 'be of one mind;' else, with what countenance should the church say to the world of men, love one another.

And thousands and thousands of hearts have heard the commandment and anon with joy received it. All men on whose souls the light of God's revelation truly shineth, with whatever apparent differences, are substantially of one mind, work together, whether consciously or not, for one and the same good. Faces that never beheld each other, are lighted by it with the same expression. Hands that were never clasped, toil unceasingly at the same work. This it is, which makes the omnipotence of truth in the keeping of feeble men,—this fellowship in all its servants, this swift consenting acknowledgment with which they hail it when it appears. God's truth; it is that electric spark which flies instantaneously through the countless hands that compose the chain. Truth,—not like each form of error, depending for its repute on the powers and influence of here and there a solitary mind that espouses it,—combines hosts for its support, and makes them cooperate across mountains and oceans, yea and ages of time.

This is what was meant in that beautiful sentiment of ancient philosophy, that God had so intimately linked all wise men to each other, that if one should only lift his finger in Rome, all the rest were benefited by it, though in Egypt, or Asia. This is what was meant by that *one body in Christ*, of which all his disciples are the members.

Sir, it is this sentiment which is recognised in the ancient and simple rite of the churches. God has bound heart to heart by invisible and eternal bands, by oneness of nature, of duty, and of hope. To us is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism.' And, in acknowledgment of these divine connexions existing between us, the Christian churches, whose organ I am, do offer you, my brother, this right hand of their fellowship. They greet you by me, to the exalted relations on which now you are entering; they give you a solemn welcome to great duties, to honorable sacrifices, to unremitting studies, and to the eternal hope of all souls. They exhort you to all pious resolutions, and they pledge to you, by this sign, their sympathy, their aid, and their intercession. They say to you, that so long as in purity of heart, you do the work of God in this vineyard of his,—you are not alone, but you shall be secure of the love and the furtherance not of these churches only, but of all righteous men. In every hour of perplexity or affliction, they shall encourage and aid and bless you, by desire, and by word, and by action. And when the day of success comes to you, and you see around you in this garden of the Lord, the fruit of your virtues and the light of your example, and the truth you teach shine forth together, in that day a kindred joy shall touch our hearts—we shall be glad with you, and give thanks with you, and hope for you.

Sir, it is with sincere pleasure that I speak for the churches, on this occasion, and on this spot, hallowed to all by so many patriotic, and to me, by so many affectionate recollections. I feel a peculiar, a personal right to welcome you hither to the home and the temple of my fathers. I believe the church whose pastor you are will forgive me the allusion, if I express the extreme interest which every man feels in the scene of the trials and labors of his ancestors. Five out of seven of your predecessors are my kindred. They are in the dust, who bind my attachment to this place—but not all. I cannot help congratulating you that one survives, to be to you the true friend and venerable counsellor he has ever been to me. I heartily rejoice to see their labors and a portion of his resting on one who comes with such ability, and, as I trust, with such devout feeling, to the work. Suffer me, then, *as for them*, to offer you my hand, and receive with it, my brother, my best wishes and prayers for your success in your great undertaking, and for your everlasting welfare.

From February, 1830, until he left for Europe in December, 1832, Emerson was in constant contact with his stepgrandfather, with Concord, and with Goodwin, who was beginning to capture the hearts of the small community comprising his first parish. After returning from Europe in October, 1833, until he entered the Coolidge House in September, 1835, Emerson was close to Concord affairs. Thereafter, he was one of Goodwin's parishioners. (See Journals, III, 563-564, for example.) On Sunday, July 10, 1836, the day following Goodwin's early death in Plymouth, Emerson was asked by Ezra Ripley to preach to the bereaved Concordians. Since the notice had been brief, he selected two discourses that he had used in the Second Church in Boston—Sermon 152[6] for the morning and Sermon 94[7] for the evening, both of which I outline briefly as follows:

SERMON 152. THE GOD OF THE LIVING
Text: Luke 20:38. "For all live unto him."

INTRODUCTION: Prevailing trust in the wisdom and goodness that uphold the frame of things. This sentiment ought to be cultivated by considering general views of the universal Providence of God--of his magnificent works. With these in mind, one sees that no situation is entirely hopeless.

I. All live unto God by being objects of his present care--by the love which preserves the life and order of all nature. Evidences of design everywhere: in the vegetable kingdom, in man's constitution, in the play of children. (Paley quoted.) Witness the cells of the bee, the head of a fly, the adaptability of the oyster, the protectiveness of snow, the various states of water. When we extend our view from such particulars to the general progress of man, we find cause for wonder or astonishment.

II. All live unto God through the immortality of the soul. He is God of the living. His present care of man should banish fear of death or skepticism about his ability to keep his holy ones from corruption.

III. All live unto God through the developing moral life, which points to new powers at work in man as fixed and harmonious as the laws governing matter. Obeying the voice of Duty gives man a new hold on existence and immediate participation in God's nature. Immortality is thus not future but a present state. This is the highest sense in which man lives unto God.

In order to fit this sermon into the context of Goodwin's death, Emerson added the following short paragraphs:

My friends, I have asked your attention to this sentiment now because although the language & precepts of Jesus have an everlasting pertinence to human nature, yet this seemed to address itself to the present hour & to its heavy tidings. Your pastor & friend shall never more return to our solemn assembly. Here he shall break no more to us the bread of life. His pleasant voice we shall no more hear. Now when the in-

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6 Houghton 365. First delivered in Boston on April 22, 1832.
7 Houghton 307. First delivered in Boston on Nov. 20, 1830, a few months before Ellen's death. The extant manuscript has been much revised for the ten subsequent occasions on which it was used.

creasing experience & acquaintance with you for several years had fitted him to give & you to receive the benefits of his office, he is hurried out of your sight in the bloom of manly beauty, in the innocency of his life, in the preparation & first fruits of his strength.——I leave to others the sad satisfaction of drawing his character & praising his virtues.

The voice of this event is, 'Unto God he yet lives.' Let not the horizon of the world fall like a curtain over our prospect. Follow him with the eyes of hope & faith & love whither he is gone nor let the bell that tolls for a friend knock on our hearts like a knell but like a kindly solemn admonition from the other world whither we too are bound. Let us see him safe, and alive, & born again to a better life, & to vast attainments in the eternal power of God. So shall our souls even now thro' the abundance of spiritual life transcend the limits & the sorrows of time, & by living unto God, live with all the children of God.

SERMON 94. THE FEAR OF DEATH
Text: Hebrews 2:14-15

INTRODUCTION: Emerson does not speak of indifference to death, which is not a conquest of fear but only a setting of it aside. Rather, he speaks of the legitimate fear that arises in persons of cultivation. Two reasons for this fear: (1) Such people, in losing life, seem to lose more than the uncultivated, or (2) they are not yet spiritual enough to overcome the fear. (He quotes from Bacon's essay "Of Death.")

I. Christianity deepens the fear of death. The truly cultivated person--aware of pleasure in reading, meditation, virtue, prayer--lives on a different level from that wherein dwell the seekers of carnal pleasures. He, therefore, comes to fear death more than others because of the values apparently lost.

II. But Christianity also removes the fear. A fuller effect of Christian principles upon the heart--the impact of reason and scripture--will make it disappear through our becoming aware of divine compensations for our losses. By cultivating our spiritual natures now, eternal life can appear to us to be enjoyed now. The conviction of immortality will deepen. The highest Christian love makes immortality a certainty. Bare existence is no blessing. Duty is the object of the soul, the sanctification of which leads to a perception of duration and the revelation that 'Time shall be no more.'

At some time on Sunday, July 10, probably at the close of the morning service, the parish met with Samuel Hoar as moderator for drawing Goodwin's character and praising his virtues,[8] as Emerson had indicated in his morning sermon, and for passing a resolution of gratitude and sorrow. The principal remarks were those of Ezra Ripley, who appears to have converted them into the following obituary notice printed in Concord six days later[9] and reprinted at Plymouth on July 23:[10]

Died.

In this town, 15th inst. Miss Mercy Bartlett, aged 52.

OBITUARY.

In Plymouth, on the 9th inst., Rev. Hersey Bradford Goodwin, aged 30, junior pastor of the first parish of this town.

Mr Goodwin had become so much one of us, we have been so accustomed to the thought of him in our reflection and daily habits, in our interests and affections, that he seemed to be almost a necessary part of our plans of life, of improvement and of happiness, as well as of immediate enjoyment. By his death, a dreary blank is left every where;—the street, where we saw his daily sprightly

8 See the Yeoman's Gazette, Concord, Mass., Sat., July 16, 1836.
9 See note 8.
10 Old Colony Memorial, Plymouth, Mass., Sat., July 23, 1836, p. 3.

ly walk—the domestic fireside, where we enjoyed his cheerful conversation—the church, where we heard his eloquent instruction—every place, lately so full of him—now sadly waste, reminds us how great a means of good has gone from us;—and the fondness with which our souls dwell upon the past—the uncertainty, and dark gloom spread over the future—forcibly convince us, how irreparable a loss we suffer in his death.

Mr Goodwin was born in Plymouth—graduated at Cambridge with high honors in 1826. He immediately entered the theological school at that University, and was ordained a colleague pastor of the first religious society of Concord, Feb. 17, 1830.

Having for some time suffered from a disease in the heart, in May last he went to his native town, hoping the entire rest from care and labor would improve his health. He died suddenly on Saturday morning, the 9th inst. at 3 o'clock.

Mr Goodwin was received six years ago by this people with great enthusiasm. His ordination made all our hearts glad. We formed the hope that he had entered upon a ministry of more than half a century—and that in our generation, at least, another would not be wanted at the altar. He began his labors with a fervid zeal—an honest purpose to devote his whole strength to his people—and an industry, that, in his health, did not falter.—And his course and success with us proved how happy was our choice, and how faithfully he performed his early promise. With talent and learning sufficient to gratify the pride of some of us, and excite the ambitious hope of the future greatness of our minister—with a firmness of religious faith and an ardent piety—with a distinct conception of the bearing of correct principles on the common affairs of life—he gave such public instruction, as met our varied wants, and in language and manner that carried persuasion to the heart, and conviction to the understanding.

In his private discharge of parochial duties, he was peculiarly happy. His gentleness of disposition—his blandness of manners, and his cheerful smile, pictured outwardly the benevolence of his soul within, and opened all doors and hearts for his entrance. All received him gladly — his familiar address won immediate affection and confidence, and prepared the way for his religious conversation, which left in the mind a holy impression, that was sweet to the memory and useful to the life and character.

For six years, that we have enjoyed his public and private ministration, his zeal has been so tempered with prudence, his sermons dijested with so much wisdom, his conversation guarded with so much care, that we remember no principle from him, that we wish were kept back, no sentiment, that we could wish were unspoken. Mr Goodwin was eminently a peace-maker. Living among a people, whose elements might have jarred, his mild temper and conciliating speech hushed the notes and suppressed the feelings of discord—and this, without any sacrifice of independence of spirit, for he was manly and faithful in the defence of his opinions.

He was an efficient public officer. On the school committee he was indefatigable in his duty, and while he rigidly insisted on all the provisions of the law, his winning deportment gained the confidence of the teachers and the children; and they all loved him, and were cheered and encouraged by his visits to them. In the Lyceum—the Library—in every mode of benevolence—Mr Goodwin was always a willing co-operator, ready to be spent for the public good.

But yesterday we were rejoicing in hope—in prayerful trust that God would yet spare him for us—today we are cast down in grief. The mysterious hand of Providence removed him from us, while yet he was in the vigor of his usefulness we saw not the pallid cheek—nor the sunken countenance—nor the faltering step—nor heard the whispering voice—and because we saw them not, we vainly hoped they were not there. It would have been a melancholy satisfaction to us, could we have smoothed the pillow of death—if we could have offered our dear brother and pastor our tender sympathies—if we could have heard his last dying instructions—it would have strengthened our spirit to have seen his soul triumphing over death—and to have witnessed how the doctrines of his life, faith in Christ and the hope of immortality, sustained him in the approaches of his dissolution.

Though that beautiful smile of his life will no more beam upon us—though we shall not again hear the sincere sound of his voice—yet the memory of his life and conversation still dwells among us. The good he has done—the influence of his principles and character—the effects of his preaching and example—will stand as monuments to his praise, built, not of stone, but of happier hearts, purer thoughts and holier lives, enduring as the generations of men on earth, everlasting as the soul in Heaven.—*Yeoman's (Concord) Gazette.*

The same issue[11] announced: "Rev. R. W. Emerson will preach a sermon on the character of the Rev. H. B. Goodwin, late junior pastor of the first congregational society in this town, tomorrow afternoon." Between July 10 and 17, Emerson prepared the last sermon he ever wrote (Sermon 171), delivered in East Lexington on the morning of the latter day, and in Concord in the early evening. He never preached it again, but some of its ideas were carried over into the "Address Delivered Before the Senior Class in Divinity College" in 1838. In it, Emerson avoided rehearsing what was commonly known about Goodwin. The congregation, he said, had "already heard...the traits of his character from his venerated friend [Ezra Ripley], who knew him much better than I, & to whom he was naturally so dear. I have only endeavoured to add to his portrait a view of those circumstances into which he fell or rather, among which he had to chuse his lot." I have already quoted a short passage from this discourse.[12] Here I shall briefly outline it.[13] That it reflects speculations which were to appear in Nature, published in the following September, is understandable.

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11 Yeoman's Gazette, July 16, 1836, p. 3.

12 See my "History and Biography in Emerson's Unpublished Sermons," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, LXVI, Part II (1957), pp. 103-118, esp. p. 110.

13 Houghton 383.

SERMON 171. THE TRUE PRIESTHOOD

Text: Isaiah 52:7. "How beautiful on the mountains...."

INTRODUCTION: The variety of uses which men serve in a society. Division of labor is more productive of general good than each man's trying to do everything for himself. Among these specialized offices is that of observing, recording and communicating truth. All men have an interest in its faithful administration.

I. The office characterized. Needs a peculiar genius. Most men would find the solitude and self-communion intolerable. There are no external guards. Moreover, the revealer of spiritual truth must gain no private benefit from it. He is a tower watcher set to observe and report every new ray of light--every just view of duty--without which no man can live. He cheers our labor as with a song. Scripture picturesquely calls this office "breaking the Bread of Life."

II. Emerson emphasizes a natural or <u>real</u> priesthood rather than an artificial professional class of those wearing the titles and garb, and exercising offices. He speaks of those who throughout history have borne witness to truth and shown how noble is the law <u>within</u> man, giving aid to its development.

III. The most touching examples of such men are among our contemporaries. Every reflecting person knows four, five or six people who have rendered him sweet service--found as often out of the pulpit as in it. They are natural preachers of inward light, whose eye is opened upon the laws of Duty and the beauty of holiness. They are plain men and wise who show Revelation to be <u>now</u> and Creation to be as endless a parable as when Adam awoke in the Garden.

IV. Corruption developed when, because of their superior gifts, religious men were made trustees of property and secular learning, and the office came to be sought for its gain and power. Religion then became merely formal. Golden chalices; wooden priests. Periods of popular superstition and idolatry reflected themselves in the office. Souls were believed to be saved in flocks or bundles.

V. A more adequate view of the soul is now held. Each man stands alone, and the preacher drops all claim to authority over others. His purpose is friendly; he invites consideration of truth on the basis of our common spiritual nature. Some regret over the changes wrought by the Reformation is justified. The gains, however, are notable. The priest must now influence by his personal character. He must be patient and make his own reputation--establish his own worth--even against railing and opposition. He is now on a natural basis; he is to be valued as he makes himself valued.

VI. The foregoing is now applied in particular to the life and ministry of Goodwin, who qualified for this humble office, devoutly communicated his thoughts, faithfully discharged its duties, employed his leisure in study, wrote well and became an effective public speaker. He was sensitive both to virtue and hardness of heart in others.

VII. Conclusion: "My friends. It is not without design that we are made the subjects of a various discipline & that to us as to every generation a peculiar instruction is sent. If we are set within the influences of a more liberal church if our lot is cast in an hour when old traditions & usages have lost some of their power & the mind has not yet attained a clear sight of a perfectly spiritual church, it is because there is a necessity for our education & redemption that such things should be. Let us give these things no careless glance. Our weal & hope are in them. And if a good man of lowly & loving heart, of gentle manners, & of pure life, has pleaded with us in behalf of God & the interests of our eternal nature, let us give earnest heed for he was sent to us, & the use of the talent will be asked at our hands."

EMERSON AND THE MOTIF THAT "SPIRITS ASSOCIATE"

By KENNETH WALTER CAMERON

Among Emerson's fragments on nature and life in the Poems[1] appears a couplet with an interesting and by no means easily exhaustible history:

"Around the man who seeks a noble end,
Not angels but divinities attend."

In his manuscript "Encyclopedia," which contains undated entries covering the years between 1824 and 1835, under the heading, "Passages that awaken the feeling of the Moral Sublime," is the original form of this couplet, with the mark /ن/, which Emerson habitually uses to indicate his own work:

Upon the man that seeks a noble end
Not angels but Divinities attend /ن/

One's first impulse is to detect herein the Swedenborgian doctrine that "Spirits associate"[2] or that "spiritual influences are reciprocal," doctrines that entered into his view of "Friendship."[3] But the principle is paralleled in Coleridge and in the other "rationalist" sources known to Emerson—in analogues such as: "Like only can know like;" Quantum sumus, scimus; "What we are within, that only can we see without."[4] On this point, at least, Emerson's mind was so full of lustres that one must not be too certain of provenance. This fact together with the tendency he manifests to fuse concepts from many sources in accordance with his poetic needs deserves to be illustrated.

That the "rationalism" or Idealism of both the Neo-Platonists, S. T. Coleridge and the Swedenborgians had gained his approval quite early in his ministry has already been demonstrated. He read in these and other writers simultaneously, finding in them all what he called in 1835 the philosophia prima, which is expressed rather unexpectedly in his "Right Hand of Fellowship" at the ordination of Hersey Bradford Goodwin in Concord on February 17, 1830.[5] The passage emphasizes MIND, ending with a sentiment from Stoic philosophy which will recur in this article and have bearing on the couplet with which I began.

> Christianity aims to teach the perfection of human nature, and eminently, therefore, does it teach the unity of the spirit.... It proclaimed peace. But it speaks first to its own disciples, 'be of one mind;' else, with what countenance should the church say to the world of men, love one another.
>
> And thousands and thousands of hearts have heard the commandment and anon with joy received it. All men on whose souls the light of God's revelation truly shineth, with whatever apparent differences, are substantially of one mind, work together, whether consciously or not, for one and the same good. Faces that never beheld each other, are lighted by it with the same expression. Hands that were never clasped, toil unceasingly at the same work. This it is, which makes the omnipotence of truth in the keeping of feeble men,--this fellowship in all its servants, this swift consenting acknowledgment with which they hail it when it appears. God's truth; it is that electric spark which flies instantaneously through the countless hands that compose the chain. Truth,--not like each form of error, depending for its repute on the powers and influence of here and there a solitary mind that espouses it,—combines hosts for its support, and makes them cooperate across mountains and oceans, yea and ages of time.
>
> This is what was meant in that beautiful sentiment of ancient philosophy, that God had so intimately linked all wise men to each other, that if one should only lift his finger in Rome, all the rest were benefited by it, though in Egypt, or Asia. This is what was meant by that one body in Christ, of which all his disciples are the members.

A year later (on February 8, 1831) when Ellen died, the doctrine of spiritual communion among souls assumed in his mind a personal coloring which it may have lacked before. For example, in the unpublished section of his journal for Feb. 13, 1831, he wrote: "Dear Ellen (for that is your name in heaven) shall we not be united even now more & more, as I more steadfastly persist in the love of truth & virtue which you loved?"[6] Soon thereafter, in the hope of finding confirmation and distraction, he returned to his "rationalist" sources. On April 29, when about to make a trip to the Green Mountains and Lake Champlain, he withdrew from the Boston Athenaeum Coleridge's translation of Schiller's Wallenstein (London, 1800), in which he read: "All powerful souls have kindred with each other."[7] On June 29, he wrote as follows:

> Have you not given firmness to your brow, an unquestionable majesty to your eye when you meet other eyes...just so much of assured presence of God to your soul? 'T is a noble but a true word of Bacon,—"If once the mind has chosen noble ends, then not virtues but Divinities encompass it—Si animus semel generosos fines optaverit, statim non modo virtutes circumstant, sed et Numina.... In a hovel, low born and fed on husks, you may think thoughts and act after a manner that you are sure is qualifying you every day for the most exalted enjoyments of friendship, though the word may be gibberish or a laughing-stock in that place.[8]

Apparently, then, Bacon actually supplied some of the words employed in Emerson's couplet, either in the Latin just given or in that of his entry on July 24:

> I never hear of a person of noble feelings but I have the emotion of the moral sublime, such as is caused by reading Young's line...or Bacon's sentence,—Animum qui generosos fines semel optaverit, non virtutes solum sed et Numina circumstant.[9]

The variant suggests that Emerson has in each instance rather paraphrased than quoted Bacon—a common practice in the period as may be seen in Coleridge's works. I am the more ready to believe this suggestion after searching Bacon's Latin works with considerable care and finding only the following passage—near the end of Liber Septimus of De Augmentis Scientiarum (Caput III)—which speaks non Virtutis sed Divinitatis in considering fines ac-

tionum that are honesti et boni. Interestingly enough, Bacon attributes the idea of the man of virtue communing with deities to ancient ARISTOTLE:[10]

> Quamobrem concludemus hanc partem de Cultura Animi cum eo remedio, quod omnium est maxime compendiosum et summarium, et rursus maxime nobile et efficax, quo animus ad virtutem efformetur, et in statu collocetur perfectioni proximo. Hoc autem est, ut fines vitæ actionumque deligamus et nobis ipsis proponamus rectos et virtuti congruos; qui tamen tales sint ut nos assequendi nobis aliquatenus suppetat facultas. Si enim hæc duo supponantur; ut et fines actionum sint honesti et boni, et decretum animi de iis assequendis et obtinendis fixum sit et constans; sequetur ut continuo vertat et efformet se animus una opera in virtutes omnes.... Atque hic possit esse status ille animi, qui egregie ab Aristotele describitur, et ab eo non Virtutis sed Divinitatis cujusdam charactere insignitur. Ipsa ejus verba hæc sunt; Immanitati autem consentaneum est opponere eam quæ supra humanitatem est, Heroïcam sive Divinam virtutem. Et paulo post; Nam ut ferè neque vitium neque virtus est, sic neque Dei....

Perhaps Emerson had Aristotle rather than Bacon in mind, therefore, when, in his Sermon 127 ("All Truth Is Related"), he wrote (September 18, 1831):[11]

> On the other hand every one knows how fast the vices slide into each other. Envy leads to slander slander to cowardice. Robbery often needs the seal of murder. Lust must have hypocrisy to shield it. Lies, according to the vulgar proverb, have no legs. Fraud is patched up by perjury. But all the virtues are faithful allies to each other. Innocence is a protection. Truth is brave Love is pure & generous & faithful. And from one good action a man finds his way open & easy to many so that it was anciently said "When once a man has chosen noble ends then not virtues but divinities throng around him."

On January 27, 1832, he wrote in his journal of meeting two of his Swedenborgian friends:[12]

> Talked with [Sampson] Reed and [Thomas] Worcester last evening about the mutual influence of spirits. Mendelssohn's principle,[13] that the desirable is true, is the best thing which can be alleged in favour of the position. God, we agreed, was the communication between us and other spirits, departed or present. Good wishes of us affect them. What is this more than the stoical precept that "the wise man who lifts his finger in Rome affects all the wise men on the earth." Indeed, their position is just equivalent, for they [the Swedenborgians] suppose that spirit affects spirit, both unconscious.

The following February 19, he wrote that nothing was new under the sun:[14]

> Was not all truth always in the world? Even the Lord's Prayer, Grotius represents as a compilation of Jewish petitions, and the German commentators trace almost all the precepts of Christ to Hebrew proverbs. And I learn to-day that the Copernican system,—it is gathered from the writings of Aristotle,—was maintained by some philosophers before his (Aristotle's) time.... And the new light, brand new, of the Swedenborgians even, is old as thought. I match every saying of theirs with some Greek or Latin proverb, e.g., "the wise man lifting his finger," etc.

In such quotations, one sees Emerson approaching June 10, 1835, when he announced in his synthetic "Statement of the First Philosophy:"[15] "The mind [or Reason or Intuition] reveals that Virtue is happiness; that good spirits associate; that the only Rank is Character; that Virtue is the key to the secrets of the world." And on July 15, 1838, in the Divinity School Address, he repeated this, his ripest conclusion, echoing the sermon quoted above:[16]

> All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, or auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death.

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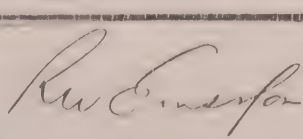
1 Complete Works, IX, 349.
2 See my Emerson the Essayist, I, 243-244 (¶s. 53-56).
3 Emerson the Essayist, I, 243, 260 bottom, and 420 top.
4 See index, Emerson the Essayist, II, and Journals, II, 357-358.
5 See pp. 29-31 of A Sermon Delivered at the Ordination of Hersey Bradford Goodwin, as Colleague Pastor with Ezra Ripley, D.D., Concord, 1830, esp. page 29.
6 Typescript of Blotting Book No. Ψ (Houghton 24A), page 44.
7 Emerson the Essayist, I, 173.
8 Journals, II, 390-391. 9 Ibid., II, 404-405.
10 The Works of Francis Bacon...collected and ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis and Douglas Denon Heath, (15 vols.) Boston, 1861. The section is headed: "Partitio Doctrinae de Cultura Animi, in Doctrinam de Characteribus Animorum, de Affectibus, et de Remediis sive Curationibus" and is found in Volume III, pp. 83ff.
11 Houghton 340. Quoted with the permission of Edward W. Forbes, Esq., President of the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association.
12 Journals, II, 455-456.
13 The principle is set forth in Journals, II, 446-447. Emerson apparently used a French text of this work, possibly: Moses Mendelssohn, Phédon, ou entretiens sur la spiritualité et l'Immortalité de l'âme. Tr. de l'Allemand par M. Junker, Paris et Bayeux, 1772. 14 Journals, II, 466.
15 Emerson the Essayist, I, 193.
16 Complete Works, I, 124.



Harvard, Oct. 7, 1793.

Sister Becca,

Your charming little letter I have just been reading. In commenting thereon, the two or three moments only, which are now my own, shall be occupied.

You have become pretty tolerably correct in your grammatical construction of sentences. I shall therefore begin to preach more & more loudly concerning elegance. Endeavor, my dear, to make your periods easy and mellifluent. The first sentence in your letter is rounded admirably. I cannot say the same of the second. Try them; your ear will show to you their difference. The next sentence ends with the word of. This little word might have been placed immediately before which. In general, it is not well that sentences end with petty monosyllables. They will not roll off the tongue with a grace. The four last words of the last paragraph in your letter would be well exchanged for these three it will arrive. The last sentence of all in your letter is destitute of a verb, and therefore unintelligible. We can do nothing, my dear, without verbs. I never in my life Becca, saw a perfect sentence without a verb.

The sentiment contained in this, and in your every epistle, is just and beautiful. Indeed few ladies of your age, my sister, write with equal judgment. I am your affectionate brother, W. Emerson.

*am is a verb.

William Emerson, the father of Ralph Waldo Emerson, addressed this letter to his sister, Miss Rebecca Emerson at Concord, dating it at Harvard, Mass., Oct. 7, 1793. All grammarians (if any survive in the Twentieth Century) will enjoy reading his advice to his young correspondent. MS. is owned by the Editor.

ARTICLES OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO EMERSON AND THOREAU IN CONCORD NEWSPAPERS

By THE EDITOR

"Latest from India" (2 columns) Middlesex Gazette, Concord, Sat., Jan. 20, 1821, pp. 2-3.

"Refusal to Be Sacrificed" [Account of a Hindoo widow who refused the Suttee. From a journal of a Baptist missionary at Benares.] Middlesex Gazette Sat., Sept. 30, 1820, page 4.

"Prophecy" [Discusses heathen idolatry and barbarism, ending with the last stanza of Berkeley's "Course of Empire."] Middlesex Gazette, July 22, 1820.

"Execution" [Death of Michael Powers reported under date of May 27.] Middlesex Gazette, June 3, 1820.

"Self Immolation" [Extract from a letter of a correspondent dated at Burdwan, on superstitions of a Hindoo widow aged about fifty years.] Middlesex Gazette, Sat., May 27, 1820, page 2.

"Horrid Murder" [On Michael Power's murdering of Timothy Kennedy, from the Boston Daily Advertiser], Middlesex Gazette, Sat., Mar. 11, 1820.

"Phillips' Speech" [Charles Phillips, the celebrated Irish orator. Report of his speech delivered at Cheltenham, England, in October on the fourth anniversary of the Gloucester Missionary Society. Deals with the work of missionaries and the horrors and superstitions in the South Sea Islands, especially on Otaheite. Bloody shrines.] Middlesex Gazette, Sat., Dec. 30, 1819, page 2. [Reptd. from the New York Commercial Advertiser.] The following quotation is typical: "In India, too, where Providence for some special purpose permits these little insular specks to hold 100,000,000 in subjection--phenomena scarcely to be paralleled in history--the spell of Brahma is dissolving--the chains of Caste are falling off--the wheels of Juggernaut are scarce ensanguined--the horrid custom of self immolation is daily disappearing--and the sacred stream of Jordan mingles with the Ganges--(Great applause.)"

"Horrid Superstition" [Extract from a letter by Capt. George Humphrey, dated Calcutta, July 8th, 1817; reprinted from the New-Hampshire Gazette, pub. at Portsmouth. A stirring account of a Brahmin suttee.] Middlesex Gazette, Sat., Sept. 23, 1819, page 4 (3 columns).

The Middlesex Gazette and Advertiser in its "Foreign" columns carried shipping and political news from India. See, for example, the issues of April 3 and 10, 1819; Sept. 18, 1818, and earlier.

"Immolation" [On burying alive a widow with her deceased husband. References to twenty-six burnings.] Middlesex Gazette and Advertiser, April 3, 1819, page 4. [Caleb Cushing became publisher of this newspaper about April 10, 1819.]

"An Account of the Inhuman Method of Executing Criminals in the Island of Java, by the Gum of the Upas Tree, the most deadly poison in the world." [Extracted from the memorandums of a well-known traveller. Begins: "In the year 1776, in the month of February...."] Middlesex Gazette and Advertiser, Jan. 18, 1819, page 2.

"Shrewd Retort of a Hindoo" Middlesex Gazette and Advertiser, Dec. 19, 1818, p. 3.

"The Novelist: Nuhamir, or Providence Justified. A Mahommedan Tale" [Appeared in several instalments.] Middlesex Gazette and Advertiser, July 4, 1818, p. 2; June 27, 1818, p. 2.

"Missionary Sketches" [On the Hindoo Religion and on the cruelty of Brahmin worship.] Middlesex Gazette, June 29, 1822, page 1.

"Temple of Juggernauth" [An account reprinted from the Christian Observer for October, 1823]. Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., Jan. 10, 1824, page 1.

"Lexington Battle" [3 columns of historical data] Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., Apr. 17, 1824, page 2.

"Concord Battle" [3 columns of historical data] Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., Apr. 24, 1824, page 2. [Important]

"Banian Tree or Indian Fig" [An account reprinted from an encyclopedia] Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., May 29, 1824, page 1.

"Report of Prof. Everett's Oration before Phi Beta Kappa" (Everett quotes from Bp. Berkeley's "Westward, the Star [sic] of Empire takes its way....") Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sept. 18, 1824, page 2.

"Obituary Notice [on Mrs. Ripley, wife of Dr. Ezra Ripley]" Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., Feb. 26, 1825, page 3.

[Up until November, 1825, the Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman had been published by Ebenezer Boyce Lamson and John C. Allen. Lamson died on November 14, 1825; Allen thereafter carried on alone. See the editorial in the issue of Nov. 19, 1825, p. 2]

"The Suttee of America" [Intoxication in America is the equivalent of the suttee in Hindoo India. Reprinted from the Philadelphia Evening Post] Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Sat., Jan. 28, 1826, page 1.

"The Suttee of India" [Reprinted from the Bombay Courier. On the horrors of the "real thing."] Concord Gazette and Middlesex Yeoman, Jan. 28, 1826, page 4.

"Ants" [Interesting article concerning the victory of some red ants over a large spider. Prefixed is the following Biblical quotation: "The Ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." Prov. xxx. v. 25. Fascinating reading.] Yeoman's Gazette, July 29, 1826, page 1.

"Abdoulrahmon" [Long account of the life of this unusual ruler, ending with the famous lines discovered after his death.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sept. 23, 1826, page 1.

"Pitcairn's Island" [Long account of the mutiny of the Bounty and the fine offspring on the island--their morality etc. and the efforts of old John Adams in protecting and nurturing the offspring. Reprinted from the Portsmouth Journal.]

Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Oct. 7, 1826, p. 3.

"Juggernaut" [A Baptist missionary's report.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Nov. 18, 1826, page 1.

"We Are Seven" [Wordsworth's poem printed] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Dec. 23, 1826, page 4.

"Indians in this Commonwealth" [American Indians then in residence in Massachusetts] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Mar. 24, 1827, page 3.

"The Banyan Tree. Under which 7,000 people may find ample room to repose in its shade!" [Long article on Hindu India and this tree.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Mar. 31, 1827, page 1.

"Town Officers &c." [Important Roster. Gives inter alia the names of the School Committee.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Apr. 7, 1827, page 2.

"Concord Jail" [Its history, statistics concerning it, and an account of its most remarkable prisoner, Patrick Mulloy.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Apr. 28, 1827, page 2.

"Burning of Hindoo Widows" Yeoman's Gazette, Concord, Sat., May 19, 1827, page 1.

"Where Shall I Go?"--poem by W. B. Tappan. [A poem in which a dying Hindoo asks what lies beyond hundreds of reincarnations. Paganism has no answer to this question.] Yeoman's Gazette, Nov. 3, 1827, p. 4.

"Concord Social Library" Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Jan. 12, 1828, page 2.

"Institute of 1770" [History of the famous debating fraternity at Harvard College, of which Thoreau and R.W.E's brothers were members.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., Jan. 12, 1828, page 2.

"Register [of institutions] in Middlesex County for the Year 1828" [Contains a list of the clergy in all parts of Middlesex County] Yeoman's Gazette, Feb. 9, 1828, page 1.

"A Hog Reeve Who Means to do his Duty" [Emerson was appointed Hog Reeve shortly after he took up residence in Concord in the Coolidge House.] Yeoman's Gazette, Concord, May 17, 1828, page 3.

"Shakers" [Reprinted from the North American Review] Yeoman's Gazette, December, 1828.

"Pitcairn's Island" [From the Boston Daily Advertiser and probably widely reprinted.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sat., June 13, 1829, page 1.

"Report of the School Committee for 1829-30" [Made by Ezra Ripley, Chairman, and Lemuel Shattuck, Secretary. Dated March 31, 1830.] Yeoman's Gazette, May 15, 1830, page 2. [Important].

"Regulations of the School Committee of the Town of Concord. Revised and adopted March, 1830." Yeoman's Gazette, May 15, 1830, page 2. [Important]

"Swedenborg" [Two columns comprising a long letter of Emanuel Kant to Mme. Charlotte de Knoblock, on Swedenborg's extraordinary gifts and miracles.] Yeoman's Gazette, Jan. 8, 1831, page 2.

"John Farmer--A Tale" [Story of a poor boy who took advantage of his opportunities and grew in moral stature.] Yeoman's Gazette, May 7, 1831, p. 4.

"Second Annual Report of the School Committee of the Town of Concord, for the Year ending May 1, 1831" Yeoman's Gazette, May 7, 1831, page 2.

"Herculaneum and Pompeii" [From Peal's book on Italy --an interesting account of discoveries.] Yeoman's Gazette, July 30, 1831, page 1.

"American Lyceum" [Long article on the early lyceum and American education] Yeoman's Gazette, August 6, 1831, page 3.

"Concord Lyceum" [Long announcement of plans for the new season] Yeoman's Gazette, Sept. 17, 1831, page 3.

"Report of Concord Lyceum" [Valuable analysis of the programs as to scope, topics selected and questions provoked and discussed.] Yeoman's Gazette, Oct. 1, 1831, page 3.

"Massachusetts Lyceum" [Gives the annual report of 16 lyceums in Middlesex County.] Yeoman's Gazette, Feb. 11, 1832, page 1.

"History of Elementary School Books" [From the New England Magazine.] Yeoman's Gazette, Sept. 1, 1832, page 2.

[On the exorbitant cost of A.B. and A.M. diplomas at Harvard---reprinted from the Boston Transcript] Yeoman's Gazette, Sept. 1, 1832, page 2.

"Grizil Cochrane: An Historical Fragment" by J. M. Wilson. Yeoman's Gazette, Feb. 22, 1834, page 1.

"Mr. Emerson's Centennial Discourse" Yeoman's Gazette, Nov. 28, 1835, page 2.

[Important article on the Social Library of Concord and a Report mentioning Emerson and his donations.] Yeoman's Gazette, Jan. 16, 1836, p. 2.

[Two-thirds-of-a-column obituary of Charles Chauncy Emerson: on his death and character. Reprinted from the Boston Courier.] Yeoman's Gazette, May 21, 1836, page 3. [See Letters, ed. Rusk, II, p. 18 fn. for ascription to R. C. Winthrop, classmate of Charles at Harvard.]

The Hindoo and Oriental items in the foregoing list indicate the widespread interest in India, in the midst of which Emerson wrote his Exhibition poem, "Indian Superstition," in 1821.[1] Though the importance of New England newspapers to our literary men remains to be assessed for the period 1825-1850, I have elsewhere indicated what they contributed to the donnée of one of Hawthorne's stories.[2] Several of the above headings will suggest episodes or topics discussed in Walden.

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1 See Ralph Waldo Emerson, Indian Superstition, ed. with a Dissertation on Emerson's Orientalism at Harvard by Kenneth Walter Cameron, Hanover, N.H., 1954. Also "More Remarks on 'Indian Superstition' and Emerson's Oriental Resources While at Harvard," Transcendentalists and Minerva, III, pp. 829-854.

2 See my Genesis of Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest," Hartford, 1955.

BACK NUMBERS OF THE EMERSON SOCIETY QUARTERLY

ARE STILL AVAILABLE, BUT IN LIMITED SUPPLY.

EMERSON IN MODERN GERMANY

The following clipping from Die Zeit of Hamburg was sent to the Society by Herr Klemens Heide of Hamburg-Finkenwerder, Fluechtlingslager, Block 8, Zi. 56, together with an interesting letter which we shall publish in a future issue. The clipping is dated Donnerstag, den 25 April 1957. (Nr. 17---Seite 5.)

Auch dies war eine Stimme Amerikas

Anläßlich des fünfundsiebzigsten Todestages von Ralph Waldo Emerson / Von Ludwig Marcuse

„Der gedankenreichste Autor dieses Jahrhunderts ist bisher ein Amerikaner gewesen."
Friedrich Nietzsche

Vielleicht war dieser aphoristische Satz ein Nekrolog — der kürzeste, der je geschrieben worden ist. *Emerson* starb im Jahre 1882, fast achtzig Jahre alt, überall in der Welt gefeiert als Denker, als Poet, als „unsere intellektuelle *Declaration of Independence*" — wie der angesehenste Richter des Landes, *Oliver Wendell Holmes*, gesagt hat.

Heute werden weder Amerikaner noch Europäer Nietzsches Überschwang ohne weiteres verstehen. Emerson gehört mittlerweile zu den ehrwürdigen Urgroßvätern; es macht sich ganz hübsch, ihn bei feierlicher Gelegenheit mit einem edlen Satz zu zitieren. Wie aber kam der aufsässige, umgetriebene, nicht nur die Masken — oft auch die Haut abreißende Nietzsche dazu, niederzuschreiben: ich darf ihn nicht loben, er steht mir zu nahe?

Auch Emerson stammte aus einer protestantischen Prediger-Familie. Auch er verlor seinen Vater früh, wurde von Frauen erzogen, war kränklich. Auch er rebellierte gegen den Gott seiner Väter — doch sehr mit Maß. Er legte sein Amt als Geistlicher nieder, weil ihm in seiner Schwärmerei für das Universum die Kirche viel zu eng war. Aber als eine junge Dame ihm versicherte, sie würde im Katholizismus ihr Heil finden, ermunterte er sie zum Übertritt. Er sorgte mehr für die Seelen als für die Seelsorger. Seine Kanzel wurde das Vortragspult Neu-Englands — dann Europas; auch in der Zeitschrift *The Dial* sprach er zu seiner mächtig wachsenden Gemeinde, die keinen konfessionellen Firmennamen trug. Er machte Schule und wurde das Zentralgestirn eines Schwarms von amerikanischen Planeten, Kometen und Monden, welche in die Geschichte der Philosophie als „Transzendentalisten" eingegangen sind. Heute orientiert sich kaum noch jemand an diesem Stern. Eher gehört er zu jenen, die so selbstverständlich sind, daß man sie kaum noch ansieht, weshalb sie immer schattenhafter werden; denn nur das lebende Immer-neu-in-Augenschein-nehmen hält große Tote am Leben.

Nietzsche hat seinem Preislied auf den „reichsten Amerikaner" die Paranthese angehängt: „Leider durch deutsche Philosophie verdunkelt — Milchglas." Und Nietzsche war nicht der erste, der sich über den reflektierenden Sänger Emerson auch ein bißchen lustig machte. Manch amerikanischer Satellit ließ sich recht respektlos über die geistige Sonne seiner Welt aus. Zwar gibt es Briefe in Hülle und Fülle, die zeigen, daß Emerson geradezu göttliche Ehren zuteil wurden. Aber der Vater des *William* und *Henri James* zum Beispiel, das *enfant terrible* dieses Kreises, ein literarischer Karikaturist von Format, schrieb damals ganz unverblümt: Emerson wirke zwar wie ein überirdisches Wesen, mache er aber den Mund auf, so befriedige er einen nicht mehr als ein altes Weib... Und Freund *Carlyle* sagte, so schlicht wie selten: „Er gibt uns nicht genug zu beißen."

Wer war Emerson? *Maeterlinck* antwortete enthusiastisch: „Ein Mystiker des Alltäglichen". Aber so mystisch wie Maeterlinck war er wirklich nicht, und alltäglich waren seine Themen auch nicht; sie richteten sich eher auf platonische Ideen wie „Freundschaft", „Liebe", „Kunst" oder auf die „Repräsentanten". Die Emerson-Generation, in Blüte um die Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, war mehr pathetisch als kritisch, mehr poetisierend als philosophierend, mehr eine Übersetzung von *Kant* und *Goethe* und *Coleridge* ins Amerikanische als originell; romantisch — ohne die Abgründe des jungen *Schlegel*. Man führte auch Kämpfe. Man wehrte sich gegen die Anklage auf Atheismus. Man studierte *St. Simon, Fourier* und die Lage der amerikanischen Arbeiter; und war im Verdacht, subversiv zu sein. Aber alles war wohlig eingehüllt in bilderreiche Sentenzen und einen ganz unkonfessionellen Weihrauch. Die stärkste Leuchte dieses Schwarms war der aufnahmefreudige, gebildere, naturverliebte, milde, irdisch-verklärte Emerson, ein bürgerlicher Heiliger, der sich still abgewandt hatte von den religiösen und philosophischen Päpsten der Vergangenheit und zugewandt einer Zukunft, in welcher Demokratie und Sozialismus, Glauben, Wissen und Genießen, Swedenborg und die Aufklärung eins sein würden. Vielleicht darf man ihn, vorsichtig, einen amerikanischen *Schleiermacher* nennen. Aber hatte Nietzsche nicht diese Schleiermacher als — bloße Schleier-Macher karikiert? Wie konnte er von diesem Emerson schreiben: „Ich habe mich nie in einem Buche so zu Hause und in meinem Hause gefühlt?"

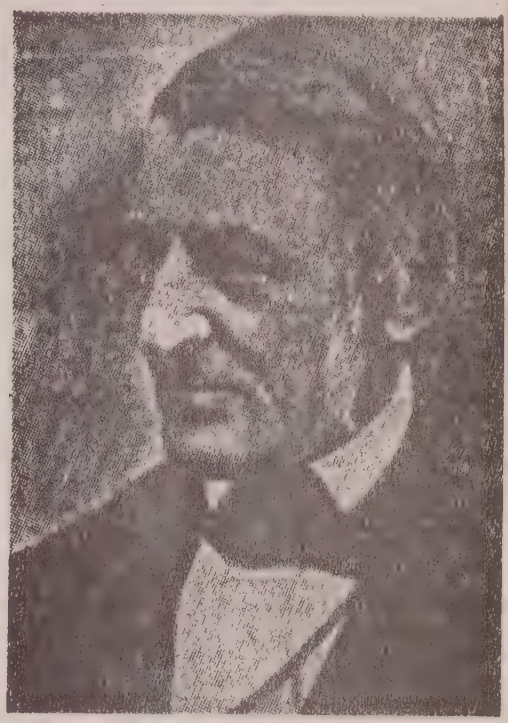
Wir benutzen diese Frage als Ariadne-Faden, der vielleicht zu unentdeckten (oder heute verschütteten) Plätzen führt. Nietzsche war gut vorbereitet, tiefer zu dringen, dank des Bildes, das er sich von Amerika gemacht hatte. Es war für ihn die Antidekadenz *par excellence*. Er liebte und verherrlichte „das amerikanische Lachen"; wohl, weil er in ihm Erholung fand vom *Schopenhauerschen* und *Richard Wagnerschen Weinen*. So ausgerüstet enthüllte er in Emerson jene Züge, die ihm selbst — besser, seinem Ideal verwandt waren. Das gilt vor allem für Emersons Jubelruf: „Die Welt ist jung". In dem amerikanischen Essayisten

und Aphoristiker sah Nietzsche eine Vorform der Essayisten und Aphoristiker Nietzsche: den Kreuzzügler gegen alle theologisch-metaphysischen Begriffsgefängnisse. Da war in diesem Amerikaner schon so etwas wie die Sinngebung des Sinnlosen: „Die Welt ist sehr leer und verdankt alles, was an ihr prächtig erscheint, dem verklärenden und verschönernden Menschengeiste." Das könnte in der „Geburt der Tragödie" stehen. Aber mehr noch: dieser „Menschengeist" war nicht der objektive Geist des deutschen Idealismus; es war der Geist ebenso gewalttätiger wie wohltätiger Menschengötter.

Meist scheint es so, als sei Emerson weich eingebettet in etwas wie einen christlichen Pantheismus. Seine Porträts von *Platon, Montaigne, Michelangelo, Shakespeare* und *Goethe* werden (wenigstens an der Oberfläche) wie Gottesdienste vor irdischen Sendboten aus höheren Sphären zelebriert. Um es ganz genau zu sagen: man langweilt sich reichlich. Aber da ist eine Unterströmung. Nietzsche machte sie deutlich in einem Zitat, das für findet, wer von ihm getroffen wird. Es lautet: „Seht euch vor, wenn der große Gott einen Denker auf unseren Planeten kommen läßt. Alles ist dann in Gefahr. Es ist, wie wenn in einer großen Stadt eine Feuersbrunst ausgebrochen ist, wo keiner weiß, was eigentlich noch sicher ist und wo es enden wird." Emerson sah nicht wie eine „Feuersbrunst" aus und schrieb nicht Feuersbrünste. Aber der Mann, der ein Organ hatte für den Brandgeruch um die großen Schöpfungen der Kultur, war mehr als ein geweihter Orator — der er auch war. Im Goethe-Essay ist die Rede von den „sublimierten Mächten der zweiten Schöpfungen". Wir denken an *Freud*. Emerson muß gewußt haben, daß die Kultur mehr ist als ein lieber Heiligenschein um Alltägliches. Der elysäische Glanz darf das Prometheische nicht verdecken.

Im Jahre 1836 hatten einige junge Amerikaner, unter ihnen Emerson, den „Klub der Transzendentalisten" gegründet. Auf der zweiten Klubsitzung sagte der 33jährige Emerson: „Schrecklich, daß auf diesem gewaltigen Kontinent, wo die Natur so gigantisch ist, das Genie so zahm vegetiert." Er donnerte — in seiner stillen Weise: wir haben keine Propheten und Heilige, aber theologische Fakultäten; keine Gelehrten, aber gelehrte Gesellschaften. Er war einer der frühesten Diagnostiker des Zeitalters der Forschungsinstitute ohne Forscher... und wollte radikal operieren. Er war tief eingebettet in die Tradition, wohnte noch in dem alten Haus in Concord, das 1636 ein Ahne gebaut hatte — und verkündete in einer seiner berühmtesten Ansprachen („Der amerikanische Gelehrte"), daß nur rechnet, was eine neue Tradition schafft. Er geißelte nicht nur das stumpfe Amerika, auch den Vasallen der europäischen Kultur.

Nietzsche spürte noch einen anderen Emerson auf. Sein Held wurde in den knappen Zeichnungen, die er (bisweilen nur in Zitaten) hinstrichelte, fast ein amerikanischer Spinoza. Die „gütige und geistreiche" Heiterkeit, die „Dankbarkeit" und „heilige Nüchternheit" taten es ihm an... Dem



Ralph W. Emerson, nach einem zeitgenössischen Bild

Aufn.: USAD

Leser von heute aber ist nicht ganz klar, wo die Dankbarkeit endete und die Behäbigkeit begann, wo die Heiterkeit aufhörte und zur Selbstzufriedenheit wurde. Es ist etwas Zwielichtiges um jenen lyrisch-meditierenden Priester; aber vielleicht gibt es überhaupt keine bürgerlichen Heiligen, die nicht zwielichtig sind. Geheiligten Zeitgenossen gegenüber darf man das nicht aussprechen. So stehe hier Emerson stellvertretend.

Es hat einen Sinn, Jubiläen zu feiern, wenn man den scheinbar Bekannten endlich kennenlernt. Dies Kennenlernen könnte die Anästhesie, die des biederen Emerson chronische Begeisterung hervorruft, aufheben. Die Überraschung, die er dem wachen Leser zu bieten hat, ist die Einsicht: hier hört man sehr vernehmlich die Stimme jenes Amerika, das nicht in naiver Selbstverherrlichung sich auslebte und nicht vor dem „heiligen alten Kontinent" Europa in die Knie brach. Ralph Waldo Emerson gehörte zu den seltenen, welche die Gegenwart nicht als Glied in einer Kette, sondern als einen Beginn erlebten.

Book Reviews

Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, Austin (University of Texas Press), 1957. Pp. 187. $3.75.

From beginning to end this book stimulates and rewards. That Hawthorne had a tragic vision of life is not new, nor is the fact that he persistently treated the difficult problem of redemption, but Roy R. Male's approach to the subject is new and exciting. Male does not get lost in futile speculations about the unfinished works, in the sterile controversy over symbolism and allegory, in a maze of jargon about ambiguities, or in the clichés about character stereotypes and recurrent themes. These besetting sins of Hawthorne scholarship and criticism he wisely avoids and gets down to the business of analysis and interpretation in his own terms.

He sees the "problem of moral growth" as the central subject of Hawthorne's fiction. Man enters the world tainted by Original Sin, and the tragedy of human life is that to ascend morally man must first "plunge into the pit" of passion; to gain eternity he must know time; to know God he must know woman; to know good he must know evil; to see truth he must be involved in sin, guilt and falsity. There is no escape from this Original Sin; there is no effective way even of avoiding its repetition in life. Attempts to do so, as in "The Birthmark," "The Artist of the Beautiful," "Ethan Brand," and The Blithedale Romance bring about something worse. As we might expect, The Scarlet Letter is the most polished handling of the theme. The sin of Hester and Dimmesdale is appropriately prior because it is like the Original Sin, an adulteration of values; and not until Dimmesdale takes the full plunge and agrees in the forest to commit himself totally to life with woman is he able to gain the "Vision," speak the "Word," and achieve the "Truth." But his immersion in sin is tragic, for just as he apprehends, he comes to his death. Hester's ascension is more limited than Dimmesdale's, as implied in her not being able to hear the flaming words of the Election Sermon, only the rhythms, in her not speaking out the identities of her lover and husband, and in her enduring long after Dimmesdale dies. Chillingworth and Pearl are not central characters. Chillingworth is the personification of guilt, and Pearl, Male writes in a masterful treatment of her role in the novel, is Truth, which is not fully apprehended by any of the characters until the end, at which time Pearl becomes woman, the heiress of guilt but also of Eve, and marries to start all over again the tragic re-enactment of Original Sin.

The next two romances show failures in redemption, in The House of the Seven Gables because of sterility, and in The Blithedale Romance because of a reluctance to face life without masks and because of abortive attempts to reverse the normal functions of man and woman. The Marble Faun is closer to The Scarlet Letter in its clear reassertion that sin and guilt are necessary for moral growth, but, says Male, Hawthorne "never accepted the glib converse of this proposition that sin is automatically redemptive." Hawthorne seems to reject the theory of the Fortunate Fall only because in logical terms it is meaningless; intuitively grasped in parable and symbol, it is the great moral truth of the universe.

Male brings to bear on his reading of Hawthorne a firm grasp of modern science, especially physics and biology, and a broad understanding of psychology and philosophy, especially Freud and Bergson. He provides a new set of critical terms in "speculation" and "investment," which describe the traditional roles of man and woman. He makes us see anew, without boring us, the mythic in Hawthorne's treatment of evil and the Freudian in his treatment of the sexes. He gives a pertinent discussion of "evolution" as the "central metaphor" in The House of the Seven Gables. In his second chapter, "The Organic-Mechanical Antithesis," he sets the background of the age by contrasting the eighteenth century and Romantic rationales. Hawthorne is, of course, a Romantic, one who holds the organic view, but he differed from his Concord contemporaries by the knowledge that their efforts to achieve "transformation without tragedy" were wrong.

Male's approach leads him to make several bold, but not unjustifiable assessments: "Rappaccini's Daughter" is one of the richest, most complex tales, usually misinterpreted; The Scarlet Letter is "the most beautifully composed work in American fiction;" The Blithedale Romance, appropriately called "The Pastoral Wasteland," is "one of the most underrated works in American fiction;" The House of the Seven Gables is marred by a "feeble ending;" The Marble Faun is the "least successful" of the novels, but Male recognizes that "its shortcomings result mainly from the grandeur" of the aim and then proceeds to give the best analysis of its structure that this reviewer has seen.

Without straining the point, Male gives proof--already abundant--of a mid-century respect for Hawthorne's calm interpretation of man's tragic plight. The book ranks with the recent studies of Richard Fogle and Hyatt H. Waggoner as a critical introduction to Hawthorne.

ALFRED S. REID, Furman University.

H. Shelton Smith, Changing Conceptions of Original Sin, N.Y. (Charles Scribner's Sons), 1955. Pp. 242. $3.50

The author endeavors to indicate the major changes in American Protestant theological thought on the doctrine of Original Sin, limiting himself to the most important evidence available to him. The early New England Calvinists, who dominated the period of colonization, held a "federal doctrine", which, deriving principally from St. Augustine, supposed a tie between Adam and all subsequent humanity. This notion gained impetus in the "Great Awakening."

With the advent of John Taylor, however, a reaction set in, producing speculation more romantic and Rousseauistic. "Man is born good," said the enlightened liberal, who prepared the way for humanism and, somewhat later, for Romanticism. Orthodoxy, meanwhile, renewed its defense of Puritan principles through Jonathan Edwards, who, in turn, was answered by men of the Enlightenment of the stature of Samuel Webster and Charles Chauncy.

Then came the Unitarianism of William Channing, who maintained that the doctrine of total depravity was inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. It was answered by the New Haven Orthodox, led by

Nathaniel Taylor, who again proclaimed that "all mankind in consequence of the Fall...are born destitute of holiness, and...totally depraved."

The reader is then introduced to Horace Bushnell and the "New Theology" of Darwinian optimism, the precursor of modern Positivism. Then come Rauschenbush, Niebuhr, Tillich and the Christian Existentialist Søren Kierkegaard, all of whom show respect for a doctrine of sin. (To this reviewer, however, the Neo-orthodox Protestant theologians deal less successfully with the subject than traditional Catholic scholars--the result of too much word-play and resort to abstract speculation.)

Though sketchy, Smith's book deserves praise for his objectivity and somewhat original treatment of a hackneyed theme. MICHAEL REWA, JR. Trinity College.

Walter Harding, Thoreau's Library, Charlottesville (University of Virginia Press), 1957. Pp. 102. 100 bound copies for sale at $3.50.

This important bibliographical help for the researcher traces every book known to have been in Thoreau's library, gives full information about it, lists the present owner (if it be extant), and throws light on how the original collection was broken up and distributed. Dr. Harding has made extensive use of manuscripts in the Huntington Library, has engaged in a lengthy correspondence with private collectors, has checked his work against the accession records of the Concord Free Public Library, and has included a list of the maps which H.D.T. owned. He tells us also which books Thoreau inherited from immediate and distant members of his own family, which were Harvard text books, and which he purchased or received as gifts from admirers and friends. Works of this sort are indispensable to the scholar and soon go out of print. No university or college library designed to support even mild research should delay in securing its copy. Every student of Thoreau will need access to its compact information. K. W. C.

Vivian C. Hopkins, Spires of Form: Emerson's Views on Art and Literature, Cambridge (Harvard University Press), 1951. Pp. 276. $4.00

In several respects this book deserves the gratitude of all earnest Emersonians. It obliges us to recognize that the man we have called a scholar, a thinker, a philosopher, a sage, was in fact--as he knew and said--primarily a poet. It makes clear, without distinctly saying so, that the fons et origo of his metaphysical thought was his personal experience, wide in range and often intense, of beauty. It brings together in well-considered arrangement a large number of apposite passages from Emerson's writings, many of them hitherto inaccessible in print. As the author says, "it presents Emerson's aesthetic theory in a new synthesis. It seeks to analyze Emerson's ideas concerning literary and artistic production, and to relate these ideas to his own philosophical concepts."

All of this is effectively done in spite of an unpromising method or plan. "I propose," the author tells us, "to present Emerson's theory as a cycle of three phases, integrally connected with each other. The first phase is the creative process; the second, the created completed work of art; the third, the reception of art by the observer."

One fails to see anything cyclical in these phases, or any hint of what is here called "circular interpretation." Least of all can one find in them what Miss Hopkins in one place calls an "upward progress" and, in another, "an upward-ascending spiral." She has apparently confused the order in which she takes up the several phases of her topic with the habitual spiraling of Emerson's thought on all topics whatsoever.

There is grave doubt, which this book does little to resolve, whether Emerson actually had a reasoned and steadily held aesthetic theory. ("Who by the name of Emerson ever thought anything out?" his Aunt Mary once inquired.) If he had one, his essay on "Beauty" in The Conduct of Life would have been a good place for revealing it, but what we find there is the evasive remark: "I am warned by the ill fate of many philosophers not to attempt a definition of Beauty." He then goes on to enumerate some of its qualities in a way that shows him profoundly acquainted with it, as living experience, in many forms.

This valuable book is to be read and re-read not for any theoretical pronouncements of Emerson's about "organic Form" and the like but for the ample evidence it presents that the man whom we sometimes think of as cold and impassive did unquestionably experience the benediction of beauty and feel its pang. ODELL SHEPARD, Jordan Cove, Waterford, Conn.

Charles Tabb Hazelrigg, American Literary Pioneer: A Biographical Study of James A. Hillhouse. N.Y. (Bookman Associates), 1953. Pp. 225. $4.00.

Although Hillhouse cannot qualify as a great nineteenth-century creative artist, he has much historical importance. As one of our first dedicated writers of drama during the lean years preceding the American Renaissance, and as one of our early men of letters who attempted to live by their craft, he commands attention. Hazelrigg throws light on educational and literary conditions during the first third of the century, brings into sharp focus the Yale setting, links his subject with other early writers, carefully documents his rich sources and supplies a useful index. Studies of this sort are indispensable in evaluating a period of literary history and have relevance to specific projects as well. Hazelrigg has been painstakingly thorough. In an appendix he has edited a selection of Hillhouse's extant letters. The bibliography includes a long list of the dramatist's unpublished manuscripts--both plays and poems. The format is pleasing. K. W. C.

Murray Krieger, The New Apologists for Poetry, Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press), 1956. Pp. 225. $4.00.

The author concerns himself with the "new critics" who theorize about the nature and function of poetry as opposed to the nature and function of science, and who are engaged in a "new apology for poetry." Seeking to narrow the range in which one may

ask the right questions, he proposes the following: How can the insistence on an unqualified integrity of poetic context "maintain the self-containedness of the linguistic interrelations with a poem when clearly symbols cannot function unless they mean?" How can poetry be at once nonreferential and referential? "How utterly self-contained can a poem be before its closed system would prove invulnerable to the reader's attempt to invade it?" How can the poet approach the task of composing with a set of preconceived ideas when by necessity the poem, as unique experience, emerges from the struggle of the artist with his medium? He does not attempt to answer, being content to clear the ground for a systematic aesthetics of poetry.

His first section deals with the psychology of poetic creativity--with science, poetry and the imagination, relating his discussion to Coleridge's famous distinctions. In the second, he considers the structure of the poem as an aesthetic object viewed in terms of a definition of aesthetic experience. In the third, on science, poetry and cognition, he considers the unique function of poetry in human experience. The most lucid essay of the entire book, it deals with the cognitive function of poetry and with historic background from Plato to modern theorists.

The volume is not intended for beginners so much as for seasoned critics to whom the vocabulary is familiar. It deserves a wide hearing.

MICHAEL P. REWA, JR. Trinity College

Plotinus: The Enneads. Tr. Stephen MacKenna. Second ed. revised by B. S. Page, with foreword by E. R. Dodds and an Introduction by Paul Henry, S.J. N.Y. (Pantheon Books), [1957]. Pp. 635. $12.50.

The importance of Plotinus for the student of the Romantic Movement in both England and America needs no demonstration. Emerson's much-used and annotated copy of the Select Works of Plotinus in Thomas Taylor's translation (now in the Houghton Library) is partial evidence. Students of Coleridge and Shelley know the heavy indebtedness of both writers to the majestic theism of the Neo-Platonists. The present edition--a remarkable monument of the scholarship of Stephen MacKenna, whose first issue of this translation in a number of parts, when it can be had on today's market, brings $30 or more. The Pantheon edition provides the scholar with the most useful edition ever published in English--and in one compact volume beautifully printed. Paul Henry's preliminary essay suggests the rich interrelations between Plotinus and Christian theology through the centuries and makes distinctions that usefully supplement those of Prof. Hoxie N. Fairchild in his Religious Trends in English Poetry. The "Terminology" of the Neo-Platonists, set forth in the introductory pages, offers the young student a succinct account of the "system." The terminal bibliography will please student and expert alike. The price is unbelievably low.

K. W. C.

Austin and Alta Fife, Saints of Sage and Saddle: Folklore among the Mormons. Bloomington (Indiana University Press), 1956. Pp. 367. $5.00.

In recent years, scholars in American literature have seen in the New England Renaissance a rebellion against a colorless Puritan world, devoid of enough valid religious symbols to nourish the literary artist. James Baird in his Ishmael, for example, shows that Melville migrated to the Orient to find a rich cult life to substitute for the disintegrating Protestantism of his childhood. Emerson was a maker of new myths largely for the same reason, as Matthiessen points out in a useful chapter in his American Renaissance. And while Emerson was lecturing in the East, Joseph Smith prepared his "translation" of the Book of Mormon.

Transcendentalism, primitivism and Mormonism may, on one level, be considered aspects of the same movement against a reductionist Protestantism. The converts of Smith and Young, desiring a profounder cultic experience than they had known in the East, sang their spiritual odyssey in the Salt Lake Valley of Utah.

This volume sets forth the folktales, traditions, superstitions and humor of the pioneering Mormon religion and its people. There are stories about Smith's moment of revelation; the days in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri; the great trek West; the establishment of the New Zion; polygamy, relations with the Indians, tales of faith, legends and songs. There is a chapter devoted to stories by non-Mormons about their picturesque neighbors. The work of the Fifes is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the Weltgeist of the last century.

FRED H. WERNER, Trinity College.

Charmenz S. Lenhart, Musical Influence on American Poetry. Athens, Ga. (University of Georgia Press), 1956. xiii+337. $5.00.

The purpose of this book is to shed new light on the influence of music in America and to assess the conscious efforts of American poets in duplicating a musical idea. The first three chapters cover musical history in the colonies and early republic and discuss the quality of early American verse.

That the influence of music upon Emerson was profound can be seen in his numerous reference. His ear was a good one--despite the judgments of undiscerning critics--and his modernity prepared the way for Frost. "The use Emerson makes of music in his poetry is often that of synaesthesia--that is, music is mingled with other senses so that the effect is diffuse, suggestive, but at the same time pleasing because of the breadth of his suggestiveness.... His mingling of music and nature--that is, sound and sight--makes for tremendous transcendental possibilities...." The Transcendentalists sought to bring music and religion close together.

The author proceeds to discuss the Southern poets and the New England Brahmins, especially Longfellow, who owed much to his musical background and to his association with the Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull. The last three chapters deal with Poe, Whitman and Lanier in a thorough fashion. "Actually the unity of Leaves of Grass is the same as that of a symphony, no longer dependent upon pretty melodies but fascinating in its grandeur and its treat-

ment." Whitman's diffuseness, his line, his verse form and his inspiration owe much to music. Sidney Lanier is considered at length, followed by modern poets like Lindsay, Sandburg, J. G. Fletcher, Conrad Aiken and T. S. Eliot.

The volume is a treasure-house of detail--not always interesting reading but an excellent work of reference not likely soon to be superseded.

MICHAEL P. REWA, JR. Trinity College

Floyd C. Watkins, Thomas Wolfe's Characters: Portraits from Life. Norman (University of Oklahoma Press), 1957. xiii+194. $3.75.

No other modern author--neither Joyce in Ireland nor Proust in France--so exclusively has drawn upon himself and his small environment for purposes of fiction as has Thomas Wolfe, who may justifiably be called a belated Romantic, the spiritual contemporary of Thoreau of Walden, Melville the sailor, and Wilhelm Meister. In attempting a "total recall" of his past years for four novels and two volumes of short stories--especially of his childhood in Asheville--Wolfe was partly indebted to procedures recommended by Frederick Koch and the Carolina Playmakers, as Watkins suggests, but temperament more largely explains his practice. Like his literary kinsmen in Concord, in Weimar, or upon the high seas chasing whales, therefore, Wolfe can be read for social criticism and Zeitgeist, which Watkins' timely study points up and which, if not appraised in our day, might well be irrecoverable as a dimension of Wolfe's fiction a generation hence. Many of Wolfe's contemporaries are still alive. Ashevillians continue to have their memories of him and of their violent reactions to his incisive pictures of them. Watkins convincingly demonstrates that Wolfe's choices of names for most--perhaps for all--his characters and episodes indicate a deliberate or subconscious purpose to expose the familiar. Watkins has, therefore, arranged the novels in order of their appearance, studied the reactions of groups in Asheville that were especially indignant at the novelist's treatment, and indefatigably studied collateral records, letters, and accounts of talks by Wolfe's family and friends in order to apprehend "reality before it was transformed into art." Besides seeking innumerable interviews in North Carolina, he turned to old city directories, files of yellowed newspapers, the earliest telephone books, photographs, and records in the University of North Carolina and in local courthouses. What he has brought to light is still warm to the touch--some of it still too hot to handle in print. The new dimension he has established will be permanently useful to critics of Wolfe. His valuable index of characters and places, his reproductions and other illustrations deserve our thanks. Some repetitiousness--inevitable, doubtless, because of the chronological arrangement--in no way detracts from the significance of his achievement.

K. W. C.

Babette Deutsch, Poetry in Our Time, N.Y. (Columbia University Press), 1956. Pp. xvi + 411. $5.00.

The second printing of Miss Deutsch's book is textually identical with the first edition of 1952. The author has added a new foreword and omitted a chronology of significant dates, mainly of publication, in English and American poetry for the first half of the Twentieth Century. The second printing, for this reason, is a less useful book than the first.

The notion of usefulness is, in fact, the nub of this reviewer's perplexity. Critical, biographical, bibliographical, historical—these are more than generic labels; they are statements of utility. They may, some books of this kind, make entertaining reading on occasion, but they need not. A good literary history earns its slot on the shelf because we can always turn to it for facts. A bibliography is as amusing and indispensable as a telephone directory.

Poetry in Our Time, without having earned literary manumission, somehow fails to serve in the library of the scholar, the pedagogue, or even the dilettante. The book invites criticism as literary history, since the ordering of its materials is roughly from the turn of the century to the present time. Her first chapter deals chiefly with Hardy, Housman and Jeffers, limped presumably because they all take a rather dim view of the world. But what context such terms as optimism and pessimism must have for men who have come under the influence of Darwin, Bergson, Comte and Freud we have no inkling.

Her second chapter, "Farewell Romance," discusses mainly Kipling, Masefield, Lindsay, Masters and Sandburg. Again the connections are more obvious than valid. As for what the term "romance" means, we are left in doubt. Rejection of shepherdesses and cupids in favor of Diesels and tenements is, unsupported, a rather superficial criterion of a movement in poetry.

But if the book is not history, neither is it quite satisfactory as esthetic criticism, though here again is a category within which the book asks to be placed. She tends to compose a pastiche of quotations, which is not at all the same thing as strict examination of a text.

Rereading what he has written thus far, this reviewer feels that he has been unkinder than he intended to be, yet we do not have the lives of the poets, or a particularly good reference book, or an interpretation of literary history. For whom, then, was this book written?

ANDREW SCHILLER.

William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol, N.Y. (Columbia University Press), 1955. Pp. 278. $4.50.

The book demands slow and careful reading, particularly in the first chapter, which is exploratory and definitive. Tindall's style--and it deserves mention--is compact, witty and filled with the tropes which are the subject of the book. Tindall is, essentially, an expansion of Austin Warren's chapter ("Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth") in the Theory of Literature. Concerned with symbol, he wisely embraces all the four overlapping modes. "The symbol," he says, conceals what it carries and resists total explanation because it is founded upon analogy, which, philosophers say, is primitive, childish and irrational.... If symbol is analogy it is related to metaphor, but...a metaphor one

half of which remains unstated and indefinite. As in metaphor, the halves of the equation may be related by partial similarity, which is qualitative at times and structural or functional at others but hardly ever imitative or representative."

Tindall's poetics, then, is essentially non-Aristotelian. Art is not mimetic but an abstract construct sui generis, and criticism, as we shall see, runs finally into a frustrating tautology: the poem is the poem. This sounds like a familiar assumption of the New Critics, but Tindall means by it something a little different, and the critical method which he bases upon it is considerably different. The key to the difference is the notion that, in poetry at least, the two sides of the analogic "equation" do not equal one another, but add up to a third expression which is not only more than the sum of the parts, but indefinably more. "The literary symbol," he writes, "an analogy for something unstated, consists of an articulation of verbal elements that, going beyond reference and the limits of discourse, embodies and offers a complex of feeling and thought. Not necessarily an image, this analogical embodiment may also be a rhythm, a juxtaposition, an action, a proposition, a structure, or a poem. One half of this peculiar analogy embodies the other, and the symbol is what it symbolizes."

The main body of the book is devoted to exegetical application of the definition, pursuing contrastively specific symbols (the rose, the sea, the road, the desert), the growth of images in certain traditions (the Hermetic, for instance) into symbol and myth, both in poetry and prose. The critical theory, manifest in its application throughout the work, is made the subject of discussion at the end.

One of Professor Tindall's important contributions is the official re-establishment of an area of esthetic ignorance. Radiance is an acceptable term; mystery is, perhaps, an older one. Art is not scientific discourse, but the artist must perforce use the terms of the knowable; the artifact, analogously, is knowable and statable in its parts, but as an entity is ineffable. It is, to repeat Professor Tindall's oxymoron, something at once articulated and indeterminate.

ANDREW SCHILLER.

Jean Holloway, Edward Everett Hale: A Biography. Austin (University of Texas Press), 1956. Pp. 275. $4.95.

It is surprising that an interesting figure like Edward Everett Hale has so long awaited a biographer, especially in view of the large amount of manuscript which he left behind. In his 87 years (1822-1907) he managed completely to fill his life with such vocations and "avocations unto the third power" as Unitarian clergyman, writer, journalist, historian, speaker, mountain climber, and so on.

Contemporary of Emerson (he listened to the Divinity School Address and "did not like it at all") he tended from the first to scatter his energies. A warm-hearted man who could not say "no" to the societies and committees in which Boston abounded, he was forever in demand and doing his best to meet it. A voluminous though never a great writer, he produced The Man Without a Country, the popularity of which has caused many to take the story of Nolan as fact rather than fiction. Among his "hack writings" are many good historical articles of from 25 to 40 pages.

Hale spent a full and happy life among his diverse activities, but there is a touch of the pathetic in his failure to bring to completion his projected magnum opus--the three-volume History of the Pacific Ocean and its Shores. Although the desire was there, an inherent inability to work at any one project for any considerable time compelled him to substitute many short works for a larger.

The two extremes of biography are the historical-novel style of writing and the rigorous chronology. Miss Holloway does a commendable job in keeping to the middle ground. The result is pleasing. She discreetly keeps her own personality in the background, but enough of it is seen greatly to enhance the reading.

ROBERT E. RICHARDSON, JR.

Charles R. Metzger, Emerson and Greenough. Berkeley (University of California Press), 1954. Pp. 153. $3.00

Metzger's book is a lesson in Transcendental aesthetics. American art, prior to the American Renaissance, had been laboring under a tyrannous Neo-classicism that had outlived its fertility. (Artists had become mere copiers of shapes rather than creators of form.) "If we must copy, we ought to copy flexible, universal principles," proclaimed the Transcendental prophets.

The esthetic of both Emerson and Greenough grew from their metaphysical speculations. Its very essence was organic development, functionalism. Protestant in their religion, Emerson the poet and Greenough the sculptor were likewise Protestant in their art. They held that the academies of Europe were no longer to dictate to the common man in America. Protestant esthetics made man his own arbiter in art.

But the religious connection was far deeper than this analogy. Art theory was to proceed from the Neo-classical stasis of balance and proportion to a dynamic functionalism, and thence to a cosmic representation of the essential unity and completeness in all existence. Each art work was to be a microcosm of the universe. Such a theory found support in the Transcendental near-equation of God and Nature--a reflection, partly, of the Protestant refusal of a mediating church. Since Beauty was primary in the trinity of "Truth, Beauty and Goodness" God could reveal Himself through Nature and the poet revealed the manifestation.

This books sheds light on such passages in Walden as those comparing the melting, flowing sand on the exposed railroad bed to the organic development of leaves. One understands why Emerson could call Leaves of Grass the "most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed."

Emerson the poet and Greenough the sculptor shared insights concerning architecture, where the clearest, most concrete union of art and function was to be found. Greenough had the advantage of technical training and so was better able to put his theories into practice. Though interested in architecture, Emerson expected poetry to be the ul-

timate expression of this new esthetic. Hence his enthusiasm for Whitman, whom he expected to fill the role of poet-priest.

Greenough reads like one of our progressive contemporaries. Because he was at least fifty years ahead of his times, his essays were not published until 1947. His criticisms of the blundering anachronisms in Washington architecture gain our complete approval. In Greenough, therefore, we see the constructive energy of Transcendentalism, with its imaginative flights, in contact with the everyday world.

EARLE FOX.
General Theological Seminary

Austin Warren, New England Saints. Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press), 1956. Pp. 192. $3.75

The saints portrayed in this book cover four centuries of New England's intellectual and spiritual life, characterized by constantly evolving ideas and an ever-conspicuous character: "lean, angular, firm and stedfast but ungracious." When the essentials of living had been secured, the Puritan fathers turned to ways in which to perpetuate their learning. "Not animality but cerebralism" was their characteristic vice. Contrary to opinion, Puritans did not object to organs and other instruments--except in the churches or meeting houses, and their cultural life lacked sparkle more because of frontier conditions than because of theoretical hostility. Increase Mather read Herbert's works. Copies of the Paradise Lost, Herrick's Hesperides and other English pieces were on their shelves. Art was put to use.

In chapter 3, "Neo-Platonic Alcott" is shown leading the life of a peripatetic philosopher, conversing everywhere on divinity, human nature, ethics, dietetics and practical questions. Emerson, with his "Greek head on right Yankee shoulders," did not deny that Alcott was a kind of contemporary Don Quixote, but added that Alcott's audience always played Sancho Panza.

The remaining chapters—"Emerson, Preacher to Himself," "Fenelon Among the Anglo-Saxons," "Father's Ideas--the Elder Henry James," "Father Taylor, or, Metaphor Among the Methodists," "C. E. Norton, Apostle to the Gentiles," "Irving Babbitt," and "John Brooks Wheelwright—take us from the Platonic through the humanistic into the pragmatic era. Mr. Warren's pages are not dry. Said a little girl of Henry James after a sermon on Phariseeism, "Mamma, I should think that Mr. James would wish the little Jameses not to wash for fear it should make them suppose they were clean." (Emerson smiled at this story.) Father Taylor presents to the reader Melville's "Father Mapple archetype" with all the rigging. He thought Emerson "a gull" with"long wings, lean body, poor feathers, and miserable meat."

C. E. Norton, a quiet intellect, follows the stormy Taylor; then comes Irving Babbitt whose "library was not his hermitage but his arsenal;" and last, John Brooks Wheelwright, a twentieth-century rebel poet for all his being a Bostonian.

The young reader might wish for more identifying facts or data at the beginning of each chapter, for all seem to be independent and without connection with each other. Yet linking threads exist. Despite a few technical flaws, the book has been well written by a sympathetic and searching writer who has not hesitated to call a saint a saint, and a pagan a pagan.

EARLE FOX.

Kenneth Boulding, The Image. Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press), 1956. Pp. 175. $3.75.

"Is there a level of abstraction from which segments of our universe can be surveyed and ordered?" The mass of information surrounding us requires that a man restrict his efforts to a given field, thus becoming a member of that particular subculture, his own little "in-group." His interests, activities and language are largely restricted to one segment of society. The philosophic ideal of a comprehensive and unified view of the universe has become for him well nigh impossible. A business man, for example, is to be sharp, commanding and authoritative at the office; loving, gentle, and understanding at home; and a good fellow at the lodge and on the golf links. The scientist orders his world of test tubes and white mice according to a rigid system of fact and predictability which he cannot apply to his home. This divisioning of society into unrelated and even mutually exclusive subcultures inevitably takes its toll in terms of the stability of the individual, who is often forced to live in closed circuits of communication.

Mr. Boulding humbly offers his readers a concept --the image--our mental picture or pictures of the world around us. The "image theory" for him contains a germ for a "new science, or at least a cross-disciplinary specialization" capable of giving unity to the various lives we lead. From a psychological analysis of man's thought, he hopes to lead to the foundation of a theory of knowledge able to resolve our present conflicts. He applies his theory with consistency and flexibility to behavior on levels of biology, sociology, economics, politics, history and psychology. In opposition to mechanical explanations which depend on forces either external to the person or unconscious within him, he maintains that much of what goes on in these spheres cannot be understood apart from a knowledge of how the mind works, how it communicates with other minds, and how it can succumb to error.

The book deals chiefly with effects, functions and implications of the image. Each man has a mental picture of the universe, which governs his behavior. It is not one image that we have, but a network of unbelievable complexity. The mind has spatial, temporal, relational values. It possesses emotional images as well as those of the individual's roles in his subcultures. These are all re-complicated by scales of consciousness, subconsciousness, certainty, clarity, reality and privacy. (There are undoubtedly others!)

The author despairs of most, if not all, the traditional meanings of the infinitive to prove. The coherence theory fails as a test of truth-value because there are too many coherent theories that are mutually exclusive. Proof is meaningless if it is

merely relative to the individual's subculture or his source of authority. Stable images are not necessarily true; some false images are discouragingly persistent. Amid these apparently baseless standards the "image theory" is put forward as a tentative first step in finding just what we can depend on, and to what extent.

If this book contains no astoundingly new concepts, the use of the word image and the development of its effect on communication and knowledge serve to stress the subjectivity existing in those two departments. Mr. Boulding warns that the theory of the image might well lead to a "philosophical scepticism more devastating than that of Hume." Even "the white-coated high priest of truth: austere, objective, operational, realistic, validating, is degraded to the status of the servant of a subculture, trapped in the fortress of its own defended image, and straining the grains of truth through its own value system." There is no one so "objective" as to be without his value system. "Incoming messages are not admitted to the image free. At the gate of the image stands the value system demanding payment. This is as true of sensory messages as it is of symbolic messages. We now know that what used to be regarded as primary sense data are in fact highly learned interpretations."

And yet, no one can make an intelligent effort at objectivity until he has understood the full extent of his subjectivity. The theme of this readable and provocative book cannot easily be dismissed. In our maze of discouragingly subjective analyses of objectivity, it is heartening to find one who makes an objective analysis of subjectivity.

EARLE FOX, General Theological Seminary, New York.

NEW BOOKS HARRY R. WARFEL, GENERAL EDITOR

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Aesthetic Papers (1849), edited by Elizabeth P. Peabody. A Facsimile Reproduction, with an Introduction by Joseph Jones. Gainesville, Florida (Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints), 1957. xvi + 250. $7.50.

It is worth more than triple the price of a good opera to spend an evening with the volume we are noticing in this column. This remarkable anthology--in its original edition surviving chiefly in private collections--comes to hand as crisp and fresh as it must have seemed, in 1849, to the little avant-garde of Transcendentalists who ordered their copies from "The Editor, 13 West Street, Boston." We can almost witness the excitement of zealous Elizabeth Peabody, who, because of her large investment in the printing of this very book, was obliged to close her book business. We can visualize young Henry Thoreau, who received his copy as he was putting finishing touches on A Week, published the same year. For the first time, in this book, Sampson Reed's stimulating oration on "Genius" (Emerson found in it the "moral sublime" which kept him at his best) appeared for the perusal of a new generation. Imagine, on a winter evening, coming upon Thoreau's own Civil Disobedience in its first state!! Besides poetry, Aesthetic Papers has the following articles:

Introduction: The word Aesthetic.
I. "Criticism" by S. G. Ward
II. "Music" by J. S. Dwight
III. "War" by Ralph Waldo Emerson
IV. "Organization" by Parke Godwin
V. "Genius" by Sampson Reed
VI. "The Dorian Measure, with a Modern Application" by E. P. Peabody
VII. "Correspondence" by J. J. G. Wilkinson
VIII. "Main-street" by Nathaniel Hawthorne
IX. "Abuse of Representative Government" by S. H. Perkins
X. "Resistance to Civil Government: A Lecture delivered in 1847." by H. D. Thoreau
XI. "Language" by E. P. Peabody
XII. "Vegetation about Salem, Mass. By an English Resident.

Professor Jones has supplied a rich and illuminating introduction, tracing the activities of the principal Transcendentalists in the year 1849. Though some may consider this attractive book a "collector's item," we believe it to be one of the most valuable reference works for the student of the American Renaissance to be reprinted in many years.

K. W. C.

OUR READERS ARE KINDLY ASKED TO NOTE THE UNUSUAL TREASURES AVAILABLE IN THE SERIES LISTED TO THE LEFT OF THIS NOTICE. EDITIONS ARE LIMITED. THERE IS NO PROFIT INVOLVED.